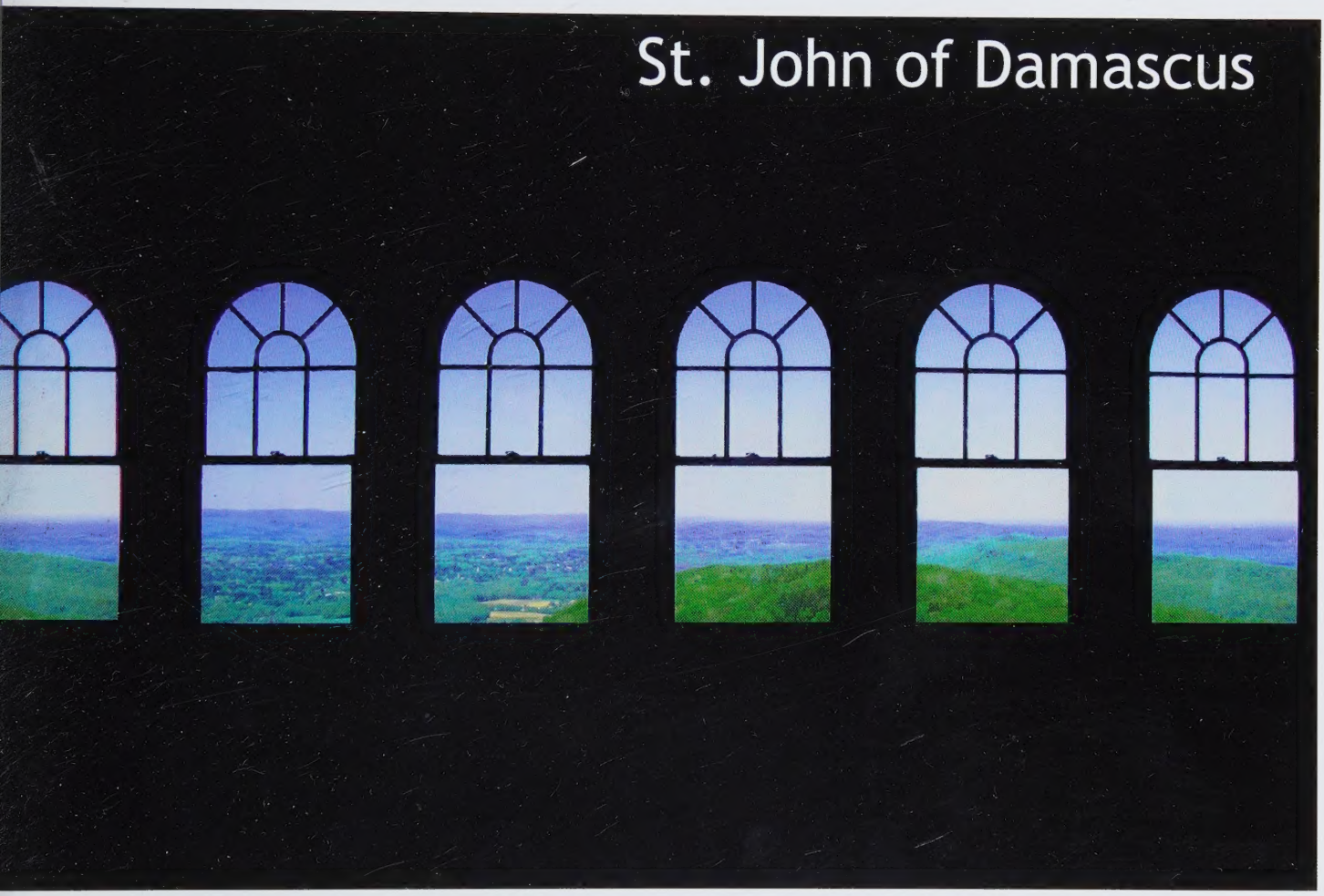
St. John of Damascus



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The Fathers for English Readers.

ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE fact that this little volume is one of a series on a settled plan, and with well-defined limits, may obviate in some measure the charge of presumption to which the author would otherwise have been liable. For to portray, in anything like due proportion, such an historical character as John of Damascus, would require a far larger canvas and a hand of more varied powers. It is not indeed too much to say that, for any adequate representation of such a character, a threefold ability would be needful. For besides his position as a theologian of the Eastern Church, we have to regard him as closely connected with the rise of Mahometanism; and, further still, as a Christian poet, whose hymns are sung by myriads at this very day. But while feeling how incomplete, on that account, such an essay as the present one must of necessity be, the author has endeavoured to make it of some little value, as the result of an attentive study of the writings of St. John Damascene.

In the spelling of Arabic or Mahometan names, no attempt at uniformity has been made. Hardly any two writers agree in this respect; and hence, when a quotation has been made from any authority on the

subject, the form there found has been retained. This may explain some apparent inconsistencies.

Besides the special acknowledgments recorded in the notes, mention should here be made of the advantage gained from two works, the *Hymns of the Eastern Church*, by the late Dr. Neale, and the articles in *La Belgique* (1861) on S. Jean Damascène, by M. Félix Nève. The excellent monograph of Dr. Joseph Langen, *Johannes von Damaskus* (1879), did not come into the author's hands till the greater part of his own work was completed; but a few remarks or corrections due to it have been inserted. It was only at the last moment also that he learnt that the Funeral Hymn of St. John of Damascus, of which a rendering is given at p. 150, had been already translated by Dr. Littledale, and published in the *People's Hymnal*. Had he been aware of this in time, he would gladly have availed himself of the abler version.

St. Paul's School,
November 25th, 1881.

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ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS.

CHAPTER I.

DAMASCUS.

In giving an account of any eminent man, it is natural to bestow some attention on the place from which he sprang. Just as our knowledge of some scarce plant could not be thought complete if we had no information about the soil in which it grew, so we can seldom understand fully the life and character of a great man without studying the surroundings amidst which he was born. But the strength and importance of this connecting link vary very considerably in different cases. The history of a Cyril is closely interwoven with that of Alexandria in his time; that of Gregory with Nazianzus; that of our own Bede with Jarrow and Monkwearmouth. But in the case of John of Damascus, while his native city has given him the name by which he is always distinguished, its influence upon his character and the ultimate course of his life does not seem to have been important. In his extant writings he makes little or no allusion to it. Events which happened there were no doubt the immediate cause of a great

and decisive change in his career. But that change —the change from the excitement of state affairs to the seclusion of a monastery—was probably due to the bent of his own mind, and would have equally taken place amid other surroundings. It is with the Convent of St. Sabas, or with Jerusalem, that we associate the really prolific period of his life. When there, Damascus was to him but one spot in that outer world which he had forsaken. From that time forward we fail to discern that it had any special interest for him.

Still, as being after all the place in which he first drew breath, Damascus cannot fail to have a strong interest for anyone studying the life of this distinguished scion of it. And even apart from this, Damascus has claims on our regard such as few other cities possess. For it is probably the most ancient city now standing in the world. It was existing in the days of Abraham, whose steward Eliezer was a native of it. Josephus ascribes its foundation to Uz, a grandson of Shem. Its chequered fortune during the reigns of the kings of Israel is familiar to us from the Bible story. While Rome was as yet scarcely founded, one long term of the history of Damascus was being brought to a close by its capture by Tiglath-Pileser, when its leading inhabitants were carried away captives to Kir. For a long period after this, partly from its being but an appanage of the Assyrian empire, and partly from the subsequent rise of the rival city of Antioch, it remained in comparative obscurity. A passing compliment to its beauty and importance by Strabo, a notice of the alabaster

found there by Pliny, and the somewhat strange epithet of "windy" applied to it by Lucan, are the chief allusions to be met with in classical authors[1]. When Pompey overran Syria, it was brought under Roman sway. In the time of St. Paul it was subject to the rule of the King of Petra, having lately been transferred to that government by Caligula. To the Apostle Paul no spot could be fraught with associations of intenser interest than Damascus. Near its walls was the scene of that heavenly vision which changed the whole life of the man who changed the world. No perils that he afterwards went through seem to have made a deeper impression on his mind than his escape as a fugitive from its battlements. The "street that is called Straight" still remains, running for the length of a mile due east and west; but alas! how changed. In those days it was one hundred feet in width, and divided by Corinthian colonnades into three avenues; while midway along its course the wayfarer passed under a Roman triumphal arch of noble proportions. Now, "remains of the colonnades and gates may still be traced, but time has destroyed every vestige of their original

[1] See article "Damascus" in Smith's "Dictionary of Geography." It may perhaps be said in defence of Lucan's epithet ("*ventosa* Damascus," iii. 215), that it is not quite certain whether he may not have meant to refer to the character of its inhabitants, as when Cicero spoke of "homo ventosissimus," *Epp. ad. Fam.* xi. 9. If it be a literal imitation of Homer's "windy Ilium," it is not impossible to find a justification for it in what travellers tell us of the fierce hurricanes of wind that traverse the deep ravines leading to the garden-like plain of Damascus itself.

magnificence. At present the street, instead of the lordly proportions which once called forth the stranger's admiration, has been contracted by successive encroachments into a narrow passage, more resembling a by-lane than the principal avenue of a noble city."[1]

From the time of St. Paul onwards it continued under the dominion of Rome till its capture by the Saracens in A.D. 634. The incidents of that capture may be more properly noticed when we come to speak of the Mahometan rule in Syria. Its subsequent fortunes, after the seat of Mahometan rule had been transferred to Bagdad, in 763, may be very briefly related. After being unsuccessfully besieged by the Crusaders in 1148, it was taken by Tamerlane in 1400, and destroyed by fire the following year. In 1516 it fell into the hands of the Turks, who retained possession of it till 1832, when it was captured by Ibrahim Pacha.[2] The greater indulgence shown to Christians from that date excited the bitter animosity of the Mahometan population, who have the reputation of being the greatest fanatics in the East. "The steady advance of the Christian community in wealth and numbers during the last thirty years," says a writer in 1868,[3] "has tended to excite their bitter

[1] Lewin's "Life and Epistles of St. Paul" (1875), i., p. 69, where a view of Damascus, looking south-east, is given, taken from a photograph.

[2] Art. "Damascus" in McCulloch's "Geographical Dictionary."

[3] In the "Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature," by McClintock and Strong, New York, 1868, vol. i. A striking account

enmity. In July, 1860, taking advantage of the war between the Druses and Maronites, and encouraged also by the Turkish authorities, they suddenly rose against the poor defenceless Christians, massacred about six thousand of them in cold blood, and left their whole quarter in ashes." "Such is the last act," he adds, "in the history of Damascus." Though still the largest city of Asiatic Turkey, with a population in 1859 of 150,000, the prosperity of Damascus is on the wane. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1870 dealt it a heavy blow, by diverting much of the traffic that had hitherto passed through it by caravans. It is a somewhat strange retribution that the opening of a new water-way should thus undo the prosperity that Damascus has so long owed to its own fertilising streams.

For it is not too much to say that to its streams of water this ancient city has owed not only its prosperity, but its very existence. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" was a question that Naaman might well ask, as he turned indignantly from the prophet's door. Travellers have vied with one another in describing the unrivalled beauty of those streams. "The juice of her life," says one well-known writer,[1] "is the gushing and ice-cold torrent that tumbles from the snowy sides of Anti-Lebanon. Close along on the river's edge, through seven sweet

of the dreadful scenes of 1860 will be found in François Lenormant's "Histoire des Massacres de Syrie en 1860." Paris, 1861. The French religious houses especially suffered.

[1] Serjeant Kinglake: "Eothen," 1854, p. 237.

miles of rustling boughs and deepest shade, the city spreads out her whole length, as a man falls flat, face-forward on the brook, that he may drink and drink again: so Damascus, thirsting for ever, lies down with her lips to the stream, and clings to its rushing waters." Standing, as it does, at the western extremity of the great desert plain of El-Hauran, which stretches away right to the Euphrates, no city of any size could have existed here, unfed by such living waters. "Without the Barada" (the ancient Abana), says Porter,[1] "the plain would be a parched desert; but now aqueducts intersect every quarter, and fountains sparkle out in almost every dwelling, while innumerable canals extend their ramifications over the vast plain, clothing it with verdure and beauty."

To what a degree the city and its surrounding orchards literally drink in the waters of its two streams, may be gathered from the fact that after they have escaped from its suburbs they flow with greatly-diminished volume to a lake, or cluster of three small lakes, a few miles east of Damascus, and there

[1] "Five Years in Damascus," 1855, i., p. 27. As a remarkable instance of the extent to which travellers may differ in their estimate of the same scenery, it may be noted that while Dr. Robinson, "Biblical Researches" (ii. 481), thought the view inferior to that from the northern heights of London, Porter considers that the "view that presents itself to the eye of the traveller as he surmounts the last ridge of Antilibanus, after passing the bleak and barren slopes beyond, is rich and grand, almost surpassing conception." But we are all familiar with the way in which our impressions of a spot are modified by our previous expectations.

lose themselves, there being no outflow from the banks.[1] The Barada is the principal stream, and brings down a considerable body of water. The 'Awaj, or Phege, the ancient Pharpar, is a less important river, but better for drinking purposes, for which it is chiefly employed by the inhabitants. The use of the water of the Barada is observed to be often attended by *goître*. At the edge of a plain thus fertilised, some sixty miles from the sea at Beirût, with the snow-capped summits of Anti-Libanus looking down upon it to the north and west, and its white dwellings embosomed in green foliage, stretching away towards the south and east, stands this most ancient of cities. The dirt and disorder of its streets, when one passes within the walls, in strange and unwelcome contrast to the beauty of the gardens without, seem a token of the misgovernment of its present rulers. Around it is nature's paradise; man's wilderness is within. Such as it is now in its better aspect, it was twelve hundred years ago. And it must make us think more highly of the devotion of John Damascene, that he could forsake, not only the glittering prospects of wordly ambition, but this fairest of earth's fair cities, for the dreary solitude of his cell by the Dead Sea.

[1] It was in the little village of Haran, near the south-west corner of this lake Ateibeh, that the late Dr. Beke thought he had discovered the true Haran to which Abraham migrated from Ur of the Chaldees. See his interesting work, "Jacob's Flight." But Lewin argues at length against this opinion.

CHAPTER II.

THE MONASTERY OF ST. SABAS.

On the south side of the *Wady en-Nâr*, or Valley of Fire, the name given to the lower part of the Kidron Valley where it approaches the Dead Sea, stands the Mar Saba, or monastery of St. Sabas. The same circumstance causes the gorge, a little higher up, to bear the name of *Wady er-Râhib*, or Monks' Valley. The savage wildness of the scene, and the sense of utter desolation around, have always left a deep impression on the minds of travellers. To the east rise the precipices, 800 feet high, behind which the blue and glossy waters of the Dead Sea lie glaring in the sun. To the north-west the dry torrent-bed of the Kidron leads up to Jerusalem, here some ten miles distant. The buildings themselves appear to hang like an eagle's nest on to the precipitous face of the rocks. "Two high towers," says a recent traveller,[1] "first meet the eye; but on approaching nearer one is bewildered with the pile of massive walls, domes, battlements, staircases, and five splendid buttresses supporting the building on the edge of the precipice from the giddy

[1] "Egyptian Sepulchres and Syrian Shrines," by Emily A. Beaufort, 1861, ii., p. 126. A view of the monastery is given in Carne's "Syria and the Holy Land," ii., p. 86.

depths below." One uniform hue of tawny yellow pervades alike the walls of the convent and the weather-worn cliffs to which they cling; and though, in the opinion of one writer, "the wild grandeur of its situation renders this monastery the most extraordinary building in Palestine," the general impression drawn from the view of it seems to be that of utter dreariness. But perhaps no better description can be given than in the words of one of the latest visitors [1] to it. After speaking of the terrible heat that prevailed, unrelieved by a blade of grass or a breath of wind, the writer continues:—"the silence of the desert surrounds it, and only the shrill note of the golden grackle, or the howl of a jackal, breaks this solemn stillness. Not a tree or shrub is in sight; walls of white chalk and sharp ridges shut out the western breeze, and the sigh of the wind in the trees is a sound never heard in the solitude. The place seems dead. The convent and its valley have a fossilised appearance. Scarcely less dead and fossil are its wretched inmates, monks exiled for crimes or heresy, and placed in charge of a few poor lunatics. Ladies are not admitted into the monastery,[2] but we were provided with a letter to the Superior. A little iron door in a high yellow wall gives admission from

[1] Conder: "Tent Work in Palestine," 1878, i., p. 302.

[2] What Miss Beaufort, writing in 1861, deservedly calls a "vulgar trick," had been lately played upon the monks by an enterprising lady traveller, who "entered the monastery in men's clothes, concealing her hands in her pockets while going over the whole building; but whilst taking coffee her sex was discovered, and she was immediately expelled by the justly-offended monks."

the west; thence a long staircase leads down into a court before the chapel. The walls within are covered with frescoes, some old, some belonging to the time when the monastery was rebuilt, in 1840, by the Russian Government. Greek saints, hideous figures in black and grey dresses, with stoles on which the cross and ladder and spear are painted in white, stand out from gilded backgrounds. Against these ghosts of their predecessors the monks were ranged in wooden stalls or *miserere* benches with high arms, which supported their weary figures under the armpits. The old men stood, or rather drooped, in their places, with pale, sad faces, which spoke of ignorance and of hopelessness, and sometimes of vice and brutality; for the Greek monk is perhaps the most degraded representative of Christianity, and these were the worst of their kind. Robed in long sweeping gowns, with the cylindrical black felt cap on their heads, they looked more like dead bodies than living men, propped up against the quaint Byzantine background. . . . The floor of the church was unoccupied, and paved with marble; the transept was closed by the great screen, blazing with gold, and covered with dragons and arabesques and gaudy pictures of saints and angels on wood. A smell of incense filled the church, and the nasal drawl of the officiating priest soon drove us away to the outer air. . . . . The convent pets came about us, the beautiful black birds with orange wings, which live only in the Jordan Valley, and have been named 'Tristram's grackle,' after that well-known explorer. They have a beautiful clear note, the only pleasant sound ever

heard in the solitude; and the monks have tamed them, so that they flock round them to catch raisins, which they pounce upon in mid air. In the valley below the foxes and jackals also come for alms, the monks throwing down loaves for them.[1] . . . . . Yet even for these poor outcasts in the stony wilderness, lifeless and treeless though it be, nature prepares every day a glorious picture, quickly fading but matchless in brilliance of colour: the distant ranges seem stained with purple and pink; in autumn the great bands of clouds sweep over the mountains with long bars of gleaming light between them; and for a few minutes, as the sun sets, the deep crimson blush comes over the rocks, and glorifies the whole landscape with an indescribable glow."

Upon the scene thus strikingly described, the eyes of John of Damascus, the monk of St. Sabas' Convent, whose life we are attempting to relate, must often have rested. He must often have felt how, in the ascent one way up the valley to Jerusalem, and the descent by "horrible abysses" to the Dead Sea in the other direction, there was, as a Greek pilgrim[2] in

[1] Nor are these the only hungry claimants to be satisfied. "A monk every day looks from this watch-tower"—a narrow wooden tower, ascended by a flight of steps from the convent roof—"for many hours, far and near, to give notice of the approach of any of the wild Arabs, who come to the foot of the walls with loud menaces. A large quantity of cakes of bread is kept in the tower, and they are thrown out to the Arabs, who are thus pacified, and take themselves off."—Carne, *ubi. sup.*, p. 87.

[2] "Voices from the East," translated and edited by the Rev. J. M. Neale, 1859, p. 155.

recent times expressed it, "the image of our life." It was here that St. Sabas, nearly two centuries before, had fixed his dwelling; a famous anchorite of Cappadocian origin, whose character for sanctity stood so high, that when, about the year 483, he made a journey to Constantinople to intercede with the Emperor for the anchorites of Jerusalem, Justinian went outside the city to meet him, and fell on his knees before him. Round the cave chosen by Sabas for his cell in this lonely wilderness, a cave from which tradition says that he had first to eject the previous occupant, a lion, other hermits quickly settled, and thus was formed the *Laura*[1] of St. Sabas. The founder is said to have survived to the age of 94 years, dying in 532; and his tomb, "gilded and adorned in the usual tawdry manner of the Greeks," is still shown under a dome, in the middle of a small paved court in the monastery.[2] Here lived those three hermits of the sixth century, Xenophon, and his sons Arcadius and John, who "every day saluted each other from the threshold of their caves, not being able to speak because of the distance."[3] And here, in due time, came John Damascene and his foster-brother Cosmas. But before we speak of the events which led him to take this step, and to exchange Damascus with its

[1] "The societies of the Anachorets, who lived in a certain union with each other in single cells, were called *lauræ*; a term which, derived from the ancient Greek adjective *lauros*, denoted properly a large open place, a street."—Neander's "Church History," Bohn's edn., iv., p. 334.

[2] Carne, *ubi. sup.*, p. 87.

[3] "Voices from the East," p. 156.

rushing waters for the awful solitudes of the Valley of Fire, a few words seem needful on the state of society at the time, and the form of government under which his native city had then passed.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAHOMETAN RULE IN SYRIA.

It has been often remarked that the fire of Mahometanism was long in kindling, but, when once alight, it spread a conflagration around with unexampled rapidity. The Prophet himself had reached the age of forty before he announced his mission. For eleven years more, from 611 till his flight from Mecca in 622, he appeared to make little or no way with his fellow-tribesmen, the Kuraish; to be dashing himself vainly against a rock; to be growing old, with the bitter consciousness of failure. His abandoning Mecca was itself an acknowledgment of defeat. And yet, as the event showed, it was a step towards victory. "The germs of future success," says a military critic,[1] "had been planted in the midst of seeming discomfiture. He departed, carrying away with him the flower of the Kuraish. Abou Bakr, Omar, Ali, Talha, Zobair, and the other 'companions of Muhammad,' left none equal to themselves, when they shook the dust of their ancestral city from off the soles of their feet. . . . The seventy men who followed the Prophet to Medina, not merely drew away the heart's blood from the Kuraish—they planted in the city which gave them shelter an *imperium in imperio*,

[1] Major Osborn: "Islam Under the Arabs," 1876, p. 21.

bound together by the strongest of all ties, the sense of a Divine calling." The same preparedness of the soil to receive the seed, which made the teaching of Mahomet take root and germinate so quickly at Medina, was the cause also of the rapid spread of Mahometan conquests soon afterwards. At Yathrib, better known thenceforward as Medina,[1] "the City," the feuds of the Arabs and the Jews—and, when the latter were subdued, the internecine feuds of the Arab tribes of Aus and Khazraj—had ended in a general feeling of insecurity and weariness of war, such as makes men cast about for a strong ruler to govern them. They were, in fact, on the point of so choosing Abdallah, son of Obay, when the arrival of Mahomet seemed to furnish them with the very leader whom they sought.[2]

In like manner, when the armies of Islam began to invade the adjoining countries, Egypt on the west and Syria on the north, their success might seem at first out of all proportion to the means employed, or to the time consumed. But the conflagration spread rapidly because the trees were dry. Just as the citizens of Yathrib had been weakened by their long-continued blood feuds, so the inhabitants of Syria and Egypt were in a state of religious, as well as civil, disunion and weakness. The majority in both those countries were Nestorians or Monophysites, "depressed by the imperial laws, and ready to welcome

[1] More properly *Medinet-al-Nabi*, "City of the Prophet."—Robertson's "Hist. of the Christian Church," ii., p. 39, n.

[2] Osborn, *ubi. sup.*, p. 42.

the enemies of the Byzantine Court as deliverers."[1] *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint:* such might almost be the language applied to Christendom at this time. The Emperor Heraclius, but lately the conqueror of Chosroes, the deliverer from the Persian yoke of Syria and Egypt, was wasting away through sickness, and constrained to look on and see these provinces again lost to the empire. Among his subjects there was the spectacle of "sect opposed to sect, clergy wrangling with clergy, upon the most abstruse and metaphysical points of doctrine."

Beyond this, there was all the advantage, on one side, of the enthusiasm which novelty alone will sometimes inspire. The religion of Mahomet was a new thing upon the earth. And there was the far more potent and enduring enthusiasm which is born of conviction—the decision of action arising from fresh and sharply-cut impressions. The soldier who "saw hell with its fires blazing behind him if he fled, paradise opening before him if he fell,"[2] would be hard to beat. And indeed it was not till Christendom had learnt this lesson, and the counter-enthusiasm of the Crusades was aroused, that the tide of Mahometan conquest was seriously checked.

What has been said may lessen the surprise that any reader might feel at observing, for the first time, the suddenness of the growth of Islam. Within thirteen years from the Hegira, within three years

[1] Robertson, p. 41. See also Milman, "Latin Christianity," 1854, ii., p. 46.

[2] Milman, ib., p. 38.

from Mahomet's death, the armies of the new faith had appeared before Damascus.

The story of the siege and capture of this ancient and splendid city, "the Granada of the East," has been often told,[1] and only the barest outlines of it need be retraced here. Elated by the conquest of Bosra, four days' march from Damascus, the Saracens, in 634, pressed on to attack this latter city. After single combats and deeds of individual heroism, which made Voltaire draw a parallel between this and the siege of Troy, the garrison were finally shut up within the walls. More than one reinforcement, sent to their aid by Heraclius, was defeated. Werdan,[2] the imperial general, who was despatched with an army of seventy thousand men, was slain, and more than two-thirds of his force perished with him. Then, in their despair, Thomas, the Governor of Damascus, tried the power of religious enthusiasm to rival that which nerved the besiegers to such efforts. "At the principal gate, in the sight of both armies, a lofty crucifix was erected; the bishop, with his clergy, accompanied the march, and laid the volume of the New Testament before the image of Jesus; and the

[1] The work ascribed to El-Wâkidy, from which Ockley drew his picturesque account, is now regarded by competent scholars as only an historical novel, written in the time of the Crusades. Wâkidy's real work is lost. Gibbon (ch. li.) follows this account in its main particulars.—See Porter's "Five Years in Damascus" (1855), i., p. 110.

[2] Gibbon, observing how unlike a Greek name this is, suggests that it may be an anagram for *Andrew*, caused by the Arabian scribe writing backwards. But surely this would be to import the English letter *w* into the Greek *Andreas*.

contending parties were scandalised or edified by a prayer that the Son of God would defend His servants, and vindicate His truth."[1] All was in vain. The impetuous Kaled, "the sword of God," repulsed a night attack in which the Christians had put forth their last energies; and as he forced an entrance at the eastern gate, Abu Obeidah entered, by capitulation, at the western. The story that Kaled, and his more temperate colleague—the one bent on sacking the conquered city, the other prepared to deal mercifully with it—met in the great church of St. John the Baptist is now discredited.[2] But there is no doubt that from this point the partition of Damascus began; the share of the Arabian conquerors gradually extending, at the expense of their Christian subjects. The metropolitan church itself, the venerable structure that had been restored more than two centuries before by Arcadius, and whose bishop had counted fifteen dioceses under his sway, was divided for a time between the victors and the vanquished. The former took the eastern end; the latter had left to them the western, an emblem of their setting glories. Little more than seventy years after, Walid I., the sixth caliph of the Omeiyades, revoked even this concession, and extorted from the Christians the share they had been permitted to retain in the church. Originally a heathen temple, it passed once more to a worship other than Christian. It is now the Mosque of the Omeiyades, and near it is the tomb of the great Saladin. The fate of the cathedral church is a

[1] "Decline and Fall," ch. li.

[2] Porter "Five Years in Damascus," p. 72.

type of that of the city. Originally shared between the contending parties, the followers of Islam soon gained the predominance. In 661, Moawiyah, from whom the dynasty of the Omeiyades took its name, made Damascus the seat of his government, and lies buried in the "Cemetery of the Little Gate." Near him are laid three of Mahomet's wives, and his granddaughter, Fatimeh; and along with them the Arabic historian, Ibn Asâker, from whom much of our knowledge of these events is derived.[1]

It must be confessed indeed that if the Arabs took possession of Damascus, they showed themselves able to appreciate its beauties; and the eulogies of their poets and romancers have compensated for the little notice taken of it by classical writers. The Omeiyad caliphs continued to reside there till Mîrwan II., the last of the dynasty, was defeated and slain, in 750, after the disastrous battle on the Zab. When, like a second Alcibiades, the hunted caliph had rushed out from the little building by the Nile in which he had sought a temporary shelter, and fallen, sword in hand, before the lances of his pursuers, his young rival, Abul-Abbas, removed the seat of empire to Bagdad, and there it continued for the next 500 years.

Our ignorance of the exact date of the birth of John Damascene—a subject to be spoken of more fully hereafter—leaves it doubtful which caliph had the most influence upon the fortunes of his family. From the length of his reign (684–705), Abd al Malek is the most deserving attention; and in him,

[1] Porter, "Five Years in Damascus," i., p. 45.

and his successor, Walid I., next after the founder of the dynasty, Omeiyah himself, we must look for whatever elements of greatness are to be found in this race of sovereigns. Passing over these, we find little but a record of indolence and profligacy. "The first Yezid, Sulaiman, the second Yezid and his son Walid, who succeeded the Khalif Hisham—these were one and all royal rakes of that thorough-going type which is to be found only in Oriental countries."[1] Hisham, whose reign (724–743) is also noticeable, from the period of John's life it covers, was chiefly swayed by avarice. That he kept his throne so long, was due in measure to the political shrewdness, or cunning, which taught him to balance the two great Arabian factions more evenly against each other, and to allow a due preponderance to the Yemenite tribe. It does not follow that the lot of Christians under such rulers was harder than it might have been under the rule of sincere and more single-minded zealots of the Mahometan faith. A Yezid, who before his accession had scandalised the believers by his avowed fondness for the wine-flask, and for falcons and hounds; a Walid II., who could order a copy of the Koran to be set up before him as a mark for his arrows, having taken offence at some verse in it which smote his conscience, and then pierce it with his arrows, exclaiming the while:—[2]

"You threaten the man proud and rebellious; well, that man proud and rebellious is me.
When you appear before your Master on the day of resurrection, say to Him, 'Lord, it is Walid who has cut me into shreds.'"

[1] Osborn, *ubi. sup.*, p. 337.

[2] Osborn, p. 338.

such men might be capricious and tyrannical rulers, might leave their soldiers unpaid, their lands untilled, their subjects the prey of rapacious officials—but Jews or Christians, as such, were not likely to suffer so much comparatively as under masters of stricter orthodoxy. In later times indeed Damascus has been notorious for the intolerance of its Mussulman population. But under the free-thinking caliphs of the house of Omeiyah, Christians were often found occupying important posts. Intermarriages were not unknown. The mother of Khalid ibn Abdallah, whom Hisham had appointed governor of Irak, was a Christian. Akhtal, the court poet of Abd al Malek, who was led in a robe of honour through the streets of Damascus, with a herald proclaiming: "Behold the poet of the Commander of the Faithful! the greatest bard among the Arabs!" was also a Christian. It was not until the reign of the same caliph that even the state records were ordered to be kept in Arabic. Before that time the records of Irak had been kept in Persian, those of Syria in Greek. The value of the knowledge derived by Western Europe from the Saracens has been often over-estimated. Most of the learning they gained was in fact picked up from the conquered races. The Arabs have rendered a lasting service to mankind by acting for a time as the depositories of science; but they could not originate. They could but transmit what they had received. "Mere Bedouins of the desert," writes Major Osborn,[1] "they found themselves all at once the masters of vast countries with everything to

[1] Osborn, p. 93.

learn. They were compelled to put themselves to school under the very people they had vanquished. Thus the Persians and Syrians, conquered though they were and tributary, from the ignorance of their masters retained in their hands the control of the administrative machinery." We may thus find less difficulty in understanding how a Joannes Philoponus should be able to influence the conquering Omar at Alexandria, or the father of John of Damascus be a high officer of state in the divan of Moawiyah.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN MANSOUR.

THE Life of St. John of Damascus, which is found prefixed to editions of his collected works, though the only one of the kind we possess, is in many respects an unsatisfactory one. The style is rhetorical and turgid; there is little precision about names or dates; whilst one at least of the events related so far surpasses belief, as to make Neander and others stigmatise it as fabulous. This, however, is probably an extreme opinion. The author's name is given as John, Patriarch of Jerusalem; and, as there were more than one of this name and title, we are left in some uncertainty about the writer himself. Without entering into details of criticism, it may suffice to say that he is considered to be the John, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who was put to death by the Saracens in the latter part of the reign of Nicephorus Phocas (A.D. 963–969). He is thus removed by two centuries from the subject of his biography; and the reader has to exercise his own judgment on the amount of credence to be given to the rude and fragmentary accounts in Arabic, which the biographer professes to have embodied and superseded. Still, as the nearest approach to a contemporary Life that

has been preserved to us, an abstract of it shall be given here.

The writer begins by remarking that, as statues are erected to perpetuate the memory of great men, so those who have the power of raising a lasting memorial by their written works are bound to take this means of handing down to posterity the names of those who deserve such honour. Who could deserve such a memorial better than the saint called from his native city Damascenus? For he was no mean star in the ecclesiastical firmament, shining with steady ray in the dark night of heresy, what time the tyrant, "leonine in name and leonine in disposition" (for so, after his manner, he plays on the name of the Emperor, Leo the Isaurian), was fulfilling the prophetic words of Amos: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" Such a champion of the faith, who fled not from the roaring lion, should not be suffered to have his record only in rude and scattered accounts, written in the language of the unbeliever. He was a citizen moreover of no mean city. Damascus was famed for its beautiful gardens, famed for its rushing streams. Its streets had been trodden by St. Paul, when first he became a Christian. It had given birth to many a noble scion (Damascius, the philosopher, Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, and others), but to none more worthy than John. Like fragrant flowers in the midst of thorns, such had been his forefathers amid the infidel conquerors of Damascus. Like Joseph or Daniel, their virtues had won for them the respect of their unbelieving rulers. They had been stewards in high trust even among the Saracens.

And as the father of John Baptist had been a faithful servant of God, so the father[1] of this second John was not unworthy of such a son. He was a man in high station, being appointed to administer the public affairs through the whole country. He had in consequence great wealth. But all his riches he devoted, not to rioting and drunkenness, but to the good work of ransoming Christian captives, and enabling them to find subsistence in the land to which they had been brought as slaves.

When a son had been born to him, and baptised at the risk of incurring the displeasure of the ruling powers, his education was cared for as beseemed his birth. As John grew up he was taught, not to hunt, or shoot with the bow, or ride, or throw the spear, but accomplishments more fitted for his future calling. To this end there was nothing so much longed for by his father as a good tutor. And Providence in due time brought him what he desired. Among the

[1] It will be observed that the writer does not give his name. Assemanus says that John's father was named Mansur, and finds fault with Pagi for making Mansur the grandfather ("Biblioth. Orient.," ii., p. 97). This opinion is followed by Dr. Littledale, in a note to the "Hymns of the Eastern Church." Assemanus even thinks it was this Mansur who helped to betray Damascus to the Saracens in 634. But the dates make this improbable, as the birth of John of Damascus is commonly fixed at 676, and in all probability was later. Theophanes ("Chronographia," 1863, p. 841) seems to imply that Mansur was his grandfather's name; and Lequien concludes in favour of Sergius being his father, who is spoken of by Theophanes, under A.D. 691, as being a good Christian, and *logothete* to the Caliph Abd al Malek, by whom he was highly esteemed.

captives one day brought in to the slave market at Damascus was an Italian[1] monk. His reverend air and bearing made even his fellow-prisoners throw themselves at his feet, to beg a blessing in their distress. No wonder then that his captors were impressed. The father of John was standing by, a spectator of the scene. Moved by the captive's tears, he drew near and questioned him. His name was Cosmas, a simple monk; he feared not death for its own sake, but for the loss it would bring of all the learning he had painfully acquired. The wisdom of the Stagirite, the philosophy of Plato—all the stores of Grecian learning and theology—were as an inheritance he had laboriously won, and would now be lost by his death for want of an heir to succeed to it. Such an heir, such an intellectual son, he had not yet had the opportunity of finding. Here, it was evident, was the very tutor for whom the father had so long searched. He hastened with all speed to the Caliph,[2]

[1] The conquest of Sicily by the Saracens (on which occasion they might easily have ravaged the adjacent coast of Italy) was not till the year 827. But Lequien inclines to place this occurrence about the year 699, when the Arabs, having conquered the north coast of Africa, were infesting the adjacent shores of the Mediterranean. He quotes indeed a statement of Theophanes to show that part of Sicily was overrun, and its inhabitants conveyed to Damascus, as early as the twenty-second year of Constans II. (A.D. 663), but this seems to lack confirmation. The point would not be worth discussion, but for the light it might throw, if cleared up, on the date of John Damascene's birth.

[2] Here again the writer mentions no caliph's name. Abd al Malek (685–705), or his successor Walid I. (705–714), are naturally thought of as the most likely.

and obtained permission to set Cosmas at liberty. This done, he arranged with the monk, all too rejoiced at such a task, for the education of his son, and, along with him, of a foster-brother of the youth, also named Cosmas. Under the instruction of their new tutor, the young men made wonderful progress. In the science of numbers they vied with Pythagoras and Diophantus.[1] In geometry they were almost Euclids. So with harmony, astronomy, and the other sciences. Into all these, and into the queen of all, theology, John penetrated with an intellectual vision keen as the glance of the eagle when it meets the sun; and Cosmas was no ill-matched companion.

But the time came when their tutor had imparted all he knew to the young students, and he felt that his work was done. Resigning his office with as much regret as their father felt at accepting his resignation, he asked leave to retire once more into a convent, and chose the laura of St. Sabas. There he spent the remainder of his life.

On the death of his father, John Mansour was sent for to court, and raised to a yet higher office than his father had occupied, being made *protosymbulus*, or chief councillor.[2] Meantime the great controversy

[1] In the article on Diophantus, by Professor de Morgan, in "Smith's Dictionary of Classical Biography," this is referred to as probably the earliest mention of Diophantus, the inventor of Algebra. But it is there assumed that the writer lived in the eighth century; in other words, that he was John IV., Patriarch of Jerusalem; but this patriarch died before John of Damascus.

[2] It seems natural to render this *vizir*; but according to

on image-worship broke out. The Emperor Leo the Isaurian, the "roaring lion," had issued his first edict against the practice (A.D. 726). At such a challenge the privy-councillor of Damascus could not remain silent. He girded up his loins to the contest with a zeal like that of Elias in the days of Ahab. To animate the orthodox in the faith to resistance, he sent out circular letters,[1] to be passed from hand to hand among the Christians. This roused the anger of the emperor. Unable to crush his opponent by force, as being a subject of a hostile power, he has recourse to stratagem. Having succeeded in intercepting an autograph letter of John of Damascus, he lays it before some of his scribes, that they may familiarise themselves both with the form of the characters and the turn of expression. He then bids them concoct a letter, in imitation of John's writing, purporting to be addressed to himself, in which John is made to propose a treasonable surrender of Damascus, if the emperor would send a force thither. The Saracen guard at Damascus (so the letter ran) was weak and negligently kept, and if Leo would despatch a band of resolute men he would capture the city with little trouble. The writer would aid in bringing about such a result. This forged letter was then forwarded to the caliph, with another from the

Gibbon (ch. li.) "the Ommiades had only a *kateb*, or secretary, and the office of vizir was not revived or instituted till the one hundred and thirty-second year of the Hegira" (*i.e.* A.D. 754), which would be later than the events under consideration.

[1] It is amusing to observe under what a cloud of words the writer wraps up this, to us, simple notion.

emperor himself. Let the caliph look to his Christian subjects, when such were the proposals they were capable of making. On receipt of this, John was summoned at once to the presence of the Mahometan ruler, and the letter shown him. He admitted the similarity of the writing, but indignantly denied the authorship of it. His denial, and his appeal for a respite in which to prove his innocence, were alike vain. The sentence was given that his offending right hand should be chopped off. This was done; and that same hand—such is the writer's childish antithesis—which was lately dipped in ink in defence of the truth, was now dipped in blood. When evening came, the pain of the wound being intolerable, John ventured to petition the caliph for the restitution of the amputated member, that it might receive burial, instead of being left hanging up in the market place. Such rites of interment might bring him the relief they did to Archytas. The desired request was granted, and the hand sent back. Then John, prostrating himself before an image of the Virgin in his private chapel, poured out his soul in supplication, praying that the hand which he placed against his mutilated arm might grow again to the limb from which it had been severed. He falls asleep, worn out with pain and weariness, and in a dream beholds the Holy Virgin signifying that his prayer is heard. The vision comes true. On starting up he finds his hand to be indeed restored whole as the other. The news of this miracle soon reaches the ears of the caliph. John is again summoned to his presence, and strictly questioned. His enemies try in vain to explain it

away; the red line showing where the knife had gone still remains visible, and no earthly physician could have wrought such a work of healing. The caliph is convinced, and would fain have had the sufferer resume his former office. But John pleaded so earnestly for relief to retire from public affairs that his master yielded; and so, having disposed of all his worldly goods, he set out, accompanied by his old companion Cosmas, for the convent of St. Sabas.

On arriving there he was lovingly received by the abbat; but, for a while, none of the inmates would undertake the task of training so distinguished a novice. At last an aged monk was found willing. Taking the new-comer with him to his cell, he taught him the first principles of monastic obedience: to do nothing of his own private will, to wrestle with God in prayer, to let his tears wash out the stains of bygone sins. Harder perhaps than all these, for one of Damascenus' habits, was the injunction to write to no one, to keep silence even from good words, to remember the precept of the heathen Pythagoras. A less earnest spirit might have broken down under such probation; but John was not one to flinch. The seed of instruction was falling, in this case, neither among thorns nor on the rock, but into good ground. Yet harder trials still remained. The old monk bade him load his shoulders with baskets, of the convent make, and go with them straight to Damascus. There he was to offer them for sale at double their value, and on no account to bate a jot of his price. With the fondness of Oriental nations for driving a bargain, this fixedness of price would

expose the vendor to abuse and ill-usage. But, nothing daunted, the once Privy-Councillor of Damascus trudged on under his burden, till he reached the streets of his old city. There he braved for hours the jeers and ridicule of all such as asked the price of his wares, till at last a former acquaintance, recognising him in his squalid disguise, bought the baskets out of compassion, and the novice returned unvanquished to his task-master. On another occasion, the brother of one of the monks who had died besought John to indite a funeral hymn, as some consolation to his feelings. The request was not complied with at first, from a fear of transgressing the letter of his superior's command; but at last, yielding to the mourner's importunity, John composed the short dirge beginning:—

"All human things are vain,
Nor bide with us through death;
No wealth may cheer the traveller there,
Nor honour's empty breath."

When the old monk, who was John's instructor, heard the sound of music on returning to his cell, as these words were being sung, he angrily upbraided the novice. Was this the way for him to keep his promise? these the sounds which should come from the lips of one mourning for his sins in solitude and gloom? It was in vain that his disciple pleaded a cause for what he had done, and implored forgiveness. He was expelled, as insubordinate, from his trainer's cell. On this the other monks interceded; but for a long time the elder was obdurate, and

would listen to no entreaties. At last he consented to name a penance as the condition of receiving the offender back; but one so humiliating, involving a menial labour so base, that the very monks themselves stood aghast. John, however, had no scruples. He had felt as one driven from Paradise, and no servile labour should count with him, if only he might find the gate of entrance open again. Thus he won the admiration even of his severe teacher.

And now the time came when the probation might cease. The old monk was warned by the Virgin, in a dream, to check no longer the outpouring of a spirit of song in his gifted pupil. The hymns of John Damascene were to be a joy of the whole Church, surpassing even the Song of Moses and the choral minstrelsy of Miriam. His exposition of the Faith, his refutation of heresies, would be as pillars of support on which the Church might lean. Thus admonished, the monk calls John to him, and bids him give free course to the inspiration by which he was moved. Thus set free at last, and with those pursuits now sanctioned to which he was by nature inclined, John gave full play to his voice and to his pen. Now were composed the great works on which his fame as a writer will rest—his *Fons Scientiæ*, his sermons, his hymns. In all of these he had a friend and adviser in his old companion, the younger Cosmas,[1] himself

[1] There is still extant a number of hymns, canons, and the like bearing the name of Cosmas; but it is difficult to determine which of them belong to the younger one of the name (made bishop of Maiuma about A.D. 743), and which to the elder Cosmas, the tutor. According to Dr. Neale, "Hymns

a poet and composer of hymns, till his promotion to the see of Maiuma, near Gaza, in Palestine, removed him from the convent. Some years before, if the chronology can be reconciled,[1] the same Patriarch of Jerusalem who had raised Cosmas to the bishopric, had ordained John to the priesthood. But while thus enabled to "praise God in the seat of the presbyters" (Ps. cvii. 32), he did not forsake the monastery of St. Sabas. And considering the "double

of the Eastern Church," third ed., p. 63, Cosmas "is the most learned of the Greek Church poets; and his fondness for types, boldness in their application, and love of aggregating them, make him the oriental Adam of S. Victor." Several of his compositions have been translated by Dr. Neale, of which the following may serve as a specimen :—

"Rod of the Root of Jesse,
Thou, Flower of Mary born,
From that thick shady mountain
Cam'st glorious forth this morn;
Of her, the Ever Virgin,
Incarnate wast Thou made,
The immaterial Essence,
The God by all obeyed!
Glory, Lord, Thy servants pay
To Thy wondrous might to-day!"

The reference in the third line is to Habakkuk ii., 3.

[1] The date of the consecration of Cosmas is commonly given as about A.D. 743; that being the year in which Theophanes places the mutilation and death of Peter, metropolitan of Damascus, while he adds that "at the same time" his namesake Peter of Maiuma (Cosmas's predecessor) glorified God by a voluntary martyrdom. On the other hand, the same chronologer places the death of John IV., Patriarch of Jerusalem (who is said in the text to have both promoted Cosmas and ordained Damascenus), in the year 735.

honour" of which St. Paul deems the elder that rules well to be worthy (1 Tim. v. 17), to mean rather a double responsibility, and a twofold obligation to keep both the body and mind under discipline, he set himself the mental labour of diligently revising and correcting his former writings. Wherever there was too much of a flowery luxuriance (says this biographer, who is a noticeable offender in the same way), he would use the pruning-hook, and reduce his style to the measure of a due sobriety. Along with this, he continued his labours of preaching in defence of the sacred images, earning from his nephew Stephen, when he too came to glorify God like his namesake, the first martyr, the title of *venerable* and *inspired*.[1] Thus occupied, death came upon him; and he of whom I write, says his biographer, now sees God face to face. This humble record has been written, he adds, not to increase his glory, or to keep his memory from fading (which needs no such memorials to preserve it), but rather that he, the glorified saint, may remember me, and fill

[1] The reference to this martyr is introduced somewhat abruptly and obscurely, but there seems no doubt who is intended. St. Stephen, called the Sabaite, from the place of his prolonged abode, was brought (according to Leontius) at the age of ten years to this convent by his uncle, John of Damascus, and died there in A.D. 794, after a residence of nearly sixty years. It is to him that we owe what, in Dr. Neale's translation, is one of the most beautiful of modern hymns:—

"Art thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distrest?
'Come to me,' saith One; 'and coming,
Be at rest.'"

me with some portion of his beatitude. "Forgive me, thrice-blessed one, and be my fervent and unceasing intercessor with God, for that I, thy namesake, out of my strong affection for thee, essayed to complete the work which another had begun; and with the materials he had collected, as best he could, have made this version under thy auspices from Arabic into Greek. Make me, too, without material alloy, a worshipper of the Trinity; make me to be so rapt in ecstasy from the body, even while a sojourner in it, that I may be borne far hence in contemplation, a burnt-offering consumed in the flame of divine love; that so, when I put off this mortal vesture in tranquility, I may with confidence appear before thee and before my God. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

With such words does this Life of St. John of Damascus end. As the reader will have perceived, there is a want of definiteness and precision about it which makes it impossible to feel much confidence in our guide. It strikes us as the composition of one who had very scanty materials to work upon, and who tried to compensate for the scarcity of facts by rhetorical enlargements, and superficial conclusions from the writings of Damascenus themselves. On the incident which has chiefly obtained for it the epithets of "legendary" and "fabulous,"—the restoration of the dismembered hand—such opposite judgments will be passed, according to the point of view of the reader, that it is of no use trying to smooth difficulties or suggest any way of compromise. Such a story is thoroughly in keeping with the habits of thought

in the Greek Church at the time. That alone need not have disqualified the author for obtaining credence, when he wrote simply of the ordinary events of a man's life. Our complaint is that, instead of anything definite and tangible, we have the inflated declamation of one who seems chiefly concerned to extol certain favourite doctrines of the Greek Church. For it must be remembered that in the above abstract the outlines only have been given, the framework—so far as there is any—of the composition. To gain any adequate idea of the style, the reader must suppose these dry bones clothed with a body of swelling verbiage. Still, as it is the only biography of any pretensions we possess, it has seemed desirable to present such a summary of it as the above. It will be a more satisfactory task to endeavour to fill up some portions at least of this shadowy outline by a study of Damascene's extant works. But before proceeding to this portion of our subject, it may clear the way a little to survey the state of the Greek Church at the time, and in particular the long controversy about image-worship, in which John of Damascus played so conspicuous a part.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREEK CHURCH IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY.[1]

IT is difficult to make the great principles understood which were at work in the Eastern Church in the time of John of Damascus, without some reference to earlier controversies. To trace back the chain of cause and effect at all completely would indeed be an endless task, but it may suffice to begin with the spread of the doctrines known as *monophysite*.

As Alexandria had been the centre of Neo-Platonism, it was natural for it to be a nursery also of monophysite principles. For there was an undoubted connection between the two. The exaltation of the Divine nature and being, as something beyond measure transcending all human expression, or human power of thought, is a prominent feature in the writings of the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite. So also is the exaltation of the mystic, contemplative mode of life, as the only way of attaining in any degree to the godlike. All this would be as an echo of familiar sounds to those who had imbibed the teaching of Plotinus. For that philosopher had laid

[1] To avoid the trouble of frequent references, it may be stated at the outset that the authorities for this chapter are chiefly Gieseler's "Eccles. Hist.," vol. ii., and Neander's "Church Hist." (Bohn's edn.) vols. iv. and v.

down, that even "meditation can only be regarded as the *way* to truth, without being ever able to reach it; nay, that unconditioned Being, or the Godhead, cannot be grasped by thinking, or science, but only by intuition." Hence, when theologians, reared in such an atmosphere of thought, approached the subject of the Incarnation, it was to be expected that they would regard it more or less exclusively in one particular light. And so it came to pass. "The ineffable, incomprehensible, transcendent union of natures:"—such was the language in which they preferred to speak of this mystery. The supernatural side of it, the absolute oneness of the divine and human in Christ, was that which had the most attraction for them. They carried this so far as to transfer the terms appropriate to the divine essence to the human nature in Christ, and the converse. Gradually, such expressions as, "God has suffered for us," "God was crucified for us," and, above all, "Mary, the *Theotokos*, or Mother of God," became recognised watchwords of the party. Cyril of Alexandria, who died in 444, may be taken as a representative of the cause in its earlier stage. The decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, summoned by the Emperor Marcian in 451, served only to exasperate the Monophysite party, who considered them too indulgent to Nestorianism; and scenes of violence and bloodshed followed, both at Alexandria and Jerusalem, and in the capital itself. The Mahometans, though professedly hostile to Christianity in any form, were naturally more inclined to be indulgent towards a phase of it which appeared some-

what more akin to their own central doctrine of the unity of the Godhead; and thus an additional party, and a most important one, was brought into the strife.

The *monothelete*[1] controversy, or that which turned upon a *single will* in Christ, was an afterswell of this storm. It arose from the endeavours to carry out the monophysite principles to their logical conclusion. If in man, it was argued, who has a single human nature, though consisting of soul and body, there is but one will, which we may call the human will, and one *energy*, or active exercise of that will,—so in Christ, who had a single nature, though both God and man, there must needs be in like manner but one will and one energy or operation. The unrivalled flexibility of the Greek language, and the ready way in which it lends itself to the formation of compound words, while it undoubtedly renders discussion easier, may have to answer for some of the confusion of thought in which the combatants were often involved. When it was found that Dionysius the Areopagite had used the term *theandric*, to express the working of Christ, so convenient a word was gladly borrowed; and it was doubtless felt to be an easier task to maintain the unity of Christ's will, or operation, when a term which looked single, though really double, had been met with to denote it.

The subject began to be actively debated about

[1] The term *monothelete* is said to be first met with in the writings of St. John of Damascus. Of course the subject, conveniently summed up in that word, had been debated earlier.

the same time that Mahomet entered on his career. Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople, had noticed, in a letter ascribed to his predecessor, Mennas, the expression, "one will and one life-giving operation," applied to the Saviour. Being struck with it, he consulted Theodore, Bishop of Pharan, in Arabia; a "person," says Robertson,[1] "of whom nothing is known except in connection with this controversy, but who, from the reference thus made to him, may be supposed to have enjoyed an eminent character for learning, and to have been as yet unsuspected of any error in doctrine; and as Theodore approved the words, the patriarch adopted them, and had some correspondence with other persons on the subject." The opposite, or *dyothelete* view, was that "the faculty of willing is inherent in each of our Lord's natures; although, as his person is one, the two wills act in the same direction—the human will being exercised in accordance with the divine." One of the ablest champions of the orthodox, or dyothelete view, was Maximus, a man of a noble Byzantine family, whose career was not unlike that of Damascenus himself. He had been "first secretary," or secretary of state, under the Emperor Heraclius, and, like the one just mentioned, had a prospect of high preferment at court. But he, too, determined to embrace the monastic life, and became the zealous and untiring opposer of monotheletism. Neander's analysis of his religious system may help the reader to form a better conception of the grounds on which the twofold

[1] "Christian Church," vol. ii., p. 42.

nature of Christ's will was maintained. "Christianity, as it seemed to him, forms the exact mean betwixt the too narrow apprehension of the idea of God in Judaism, and the too broad one of the deification of nature in paganism; and this mean is expressed by the doctrine of the Trinity. The highest end of the whole creation he supposed to be the intimate union into which God entered with it through Christ; when, without detriment to His immutability, He assumed human nature into personal union for the purpose of rendering humanity godlike: God becoming man without change of his own essence, and receiving human nature into union with Himself without its losing aught that belongs to its peculiar essence. It was with a view to secure this point, that he attached so much importance also to the articles touching the union of the two natures, in which each retains, without change, its own peculiar properties." It is an instructive comment on the passions that can be roused by such seemingly abstruse and speculative doctrines, to note what was the end of "the saintly Maximus," as he is often called. After being banished to a fortress in Thrace, where he was kept imprisoned in the hope of a recantation, he was dragged back again to Constantinople, and there publicly scourged, his tongue cut out, and his right hand severed from the wrist—in this circumstance again recalling what is recorded of John of Damascus. He was then banished once more to the region of the Lazi,—the ancient Colchis,—and there died, in 662, from the injuries he had undergone. Still severer, if possible, were the sufferings endured in the same cause a few

years before, by Pope Martin I. When Constans had published in 648 his religious edict known as the *Type*, the exarch Olympius had orders to proceed from Ravenna to Rome, and there enforce the monothelete principles contained in it. On the death of Olympius in 653, his successor, Calliopas, went on with the execution of these orders. Martin I. was seized by an armed band of the imperial soldiers in the Lateran church, and conveyed as a criminal to Constantinople. In March, 655, he was banished to the Crimea, and there he died, after enduring the greatest privations, in September of the same year.

It might seem strange to us, did we not recollect how often the same scenes have been enacted since, that such should be the practical outcome of opinions so purely theoretical as those above described. And yet it is only ignorance or indifference, that can dismiss the subject of these controversies (as is sometimes done) with only a hasty expression of contempt. I say advisedly, the subject, as distinguished from the mode in which the dispute was carried on, or the practical results to which it led. "If we looked at this controversy from one side," writes the late Professor Maurice,[1] "we might pronounce it one of the most important and serious in which men were ever engaged—the gathering up of all previous disputes respecting freedom and necessity, respecting the relation of the Divine will to the human, respecting the struggle in the heart of humanity itself. All these arguments would seem to be

[1] "Mediæval Philosophy" (1859), p. 29.

raised to their highest power, to be tested by their relation to the highest Person, to have reached the point where profound speculation and daily practice meet and lose themselves in each other. Contemplated from another side, this debate is worthy of all the contempt which indifferent onlookers bestow upon it, as upon every other great topic of divinity. For the persons who were engaged in it were utterly frivolous. For them the whole subject involved a theory, and nothing more—a theory in which the most violent passions might be engaged, but which demanded no faith, which led to no moral act. The controversy was the more detestable because such living interests seemed to be concerned in it, while it was, in fact, but an exercise for the subtlety of an exhausted, emasculated race, which had talked and argued itself into inanition and death. The historian of human inquiries has no right to pause long upon this monothelete controversy, merely because he perceives how much was implied in it. He is to measure debates, not by their abstract importance, but by their effects on the world."

The language in which the writer just quoted describes the intellectual condition of the Greek Church at this period is perhaps too strong. And yet there is much to justify it. An age of compilation is rarely an age of discovery as well. But it was essentially to compilation, to stringing together *catenæ*, or series of comments from the Greek fathers on passages of Holy Scripture, that expositors of the sacred volume at this time devoted themselves. The increased knowledge of dialectic, drawn from a more

widely-spread acquaintance with the writings of Aristotle, and the increased practice to which it was put in the monophysite and monothelete controversies, were made subservient to a formal orthodoxy, to enunciating articles of a creed. The ignorant crowd might be goaded to fury by party cries in the church or the amphitheatre; but to clamour for or against an addition to the *Trisagion* could afford little presumption that the clamourer was in earnest about the realities of Christian life. At the same time these "miserable circus-fights of the sixth century," of which Maurice indignantly complains, these windy controversies of people "who had talked about the divine and human nature till they had lost all faith in God and man," were far from devoid of effects, even lasting effects, on the political world. It is not easy to measure the importance of the step taken by the Roman pontiff in 484, when, solely on the ground of monophysite opposition, Felix II. issued his anathema against the patriarch of Constantinople, and communion was broken off between the Eastern and Western churches. Who can calculate what might have been the condition of Russia, of Europe, of the Turkish Empire, at this day, had the union of the Eastern and Western churches not been severed?

The outline thus briefly sketched of the two great controversies which harassed the Eastern Church during the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, seemed necessary as an introduction to the state of that Church in John of Damascus's own day. The latter of the two, indeed, the monothelete, lingered on into the eighth century, and John's writings are coloured by allusions

to it and its predecessor. Nearly a hundred years after Heraclius had vainly striven to unite the disorganised provinces of the empire by a compromise which should satisfy the monophysites, we find the Emperor Philippicus Bardanes (711-713) giving the ascendancy to the monothelete party, an ascendancy only to be wrested from them once more under his successor. The subservience of the Greek bishops to the imperial will is an unfavourable sign of the times: with few exceptions, they appear to have changed their front, and marshalled their subordinates in new positions, at the promulgation of an *ecthesis*, or *henoticon*, or *type*, with the same readiness as officers at a review execute the evolutions of their troops when their general has given the word of command. Such independent thought as there was seems mostly to have sought the shelter of the cloister. Yet even here, how great a difference is perceptible between the freedom and progress of the West, and the ever-circling and unprogressive disputations of the East. We involuntarily recall our own Bede, spending his last moments in Wearmouth Abbey, dictating the closing verses of his translation of St. John's Gospel, and compare him with an Eastern counterpart, such as might have been found in the solitudes of Palestine or Egypt, on that same eve of Ascension Day, 734. It may have been from a crushing sense of inferiority to the ever-growing power of Islam, no less than from the influence of writers like the so-called Dionysius, and Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, that a mystic, contemplative, symbolizing habit of mind took possession of the Greek Church at this time. The spread of

Christ's kingdom on earth must have seemed to many to be so checked, that the thoughts had no relief but in the contemplation of the world unseen. Thus the figurative, spiritualizing tendencies of the theologian, and the craving for coarse and material representations of the illiterate, could find their satisfaction together. As the newer Platonism had tried to sublimate the sensual rites of the old Greek mythology, so this "positive and negative mode of apprehension,"[1] this way of conceiving God and things divine only under images, enabled the teacher to extract a spiritual meaning from the rude and unartistic image, or the childish ceremonial, in which the vulgar delighted.

This may make it less strange to find that the next great controversy which agitated the Church, that with which the name of John of Damascus is so prominently associated, was about a subject at first sight so utterly foreign to the two preceding ones, as the worship of images. The *iconoclastic* controversy, as it is commonly called, was, however, by no means so disconnected, as might have appeared, from the more speculative ones already described. It was their legitimate successor. While the star-gazer moves on with his eyes intent on the constellations, his feet fall into the ditch. While the speculative minds of the Greek Church were thus lost in bewildering altitudes, the unlearned ones at the other extreme were fast falling into idolatry. The term is hardly too strong a one. The picture, or the image, which the

[1] *Cataphatic* and *Apophatic*, to use the actual terms.

theologian tolerated, it may be, even approved, as in its way a shadow of that reality of which nothing in this world could be more than a shadow, was allowed to become for the multitude a palpable object of their devotions. It has been often alleged as a reason for the success of the Mahometan creed, as a justification of it in the providential government of the world, that it did, in fact, recall men from what was practically a worship of saints, and relics, and images, to the primal confession of One only God; that it bade men, while they were lost in endless discussions about His nature and will, realise the fact that there was indeed a God over the world, and that His will must be obeyed. When once established, the Mahometan faith has indeed shown a far more lifeless rigidity than ever the Byzantine Church did in its darkest days. But in the first vigour of its youth, the upholders of Islam had certainly this ground of vantage, and knew how to turn it to account. There is extant a letter of Leo the Isaurian[1] to the Caliph

[1] The history of this letter, to which reference may be made hereafter, is an interesting one. I owe my first acquaintance with it to an article in "La Belgique," by Félix Nève. An Armenian doctor of the eight century, named Ghévond, had left a history of his own times, beginning with the submission of Armenia to the Arabian yoke in 661, and ending with events of 770 or 771. In the course of it he embodies a letter of Omar II., written soon after his accession (in 717) to Leo, himself also newly seated on his throne, as well as the emperor's reply. Omar's letter is one of enquiry about the Christian religion, with a statement of his objections to it as hitherto presented to him. One of these runs as follows, in the French translation (Paris, 1856, p. 42) of the archimandrite

Omar II., in reply to one addressed to him by the latter, in which, singularly enough, we see the great iconoclastic emperor playing the part of a defender of images—at least, of what he then thought their reasonable use. "We honour the cross," he writes, "because of the sufferings endured upon it by the incarnate Word of God. As for pictures, we do not pay the like respect to them, not having received from Holy Scripture any command whatever on the subject. At the same time, as we find in the Old Testament the divine commission to Moses to carve figures of cherubim in the tabernacle, and as we are inspired by a sincere regard for the disciples of the Lord, and burning with love of the incarnate Lord Himself, we have ever felt the need of preserving their likenesses; and these have since become for us, as it were, their living representation. Their presence delights us; and we glorify God, who saved us by the mediation of His only Son, appearing in the world under a like figure. We glorify the saints also; but we render no homage to painted wood (au bois et aux couleurs)."

Such were the moderate opinions of Leo about the year 717. But within the next ten years we find him taking a very different course. The temperate defender of the use of images now appears as the determined opposer of what he considered their abuse. What causes may have been at work to

Chahnazarian:—"Pourquoi adorez-vous les ossements des apôtres et des prophètes, ainsi que les tableaux, et la croix qui anciennement servait, selon la loi, d'instrument de supplice?" Leo's reply is not so civilly worded as that of his correspondent.

produce this change can only be inferred.[1] It may have been a conviction that nothing but a purified faith in Christendom could long withstand the advance of Islam. It may have been the fruit of continued attention given to the subject, since he was first attracted to it by the Caliph's letter. Or it may have been that matters had been getting worse in the Christian churches of his dominions during the past decade, and that, by the year 726, he felt it needful to interpose, and check the growing abuse of what (for want of a more convenient term) we may allow ourselves to call image-worship. At any rate, in the year above-named, he issued his first ordinance; in which, while not as yet condemning images in themselves, he strove to abolish the prevailing mode of showing honour to them by kneeling and prostration. Thus the signal was given for battle —a battle which raged long and fiercely and with very varying success. That the cause espoused by Leo ultimately failed, is (irrespective of the inherent

[1] The character and motives of Leo. III., commonly called from his native country the Isaurian, have been very variously represented. The ecclesiastical historians have naturally portrayed him as a violent and persecuting tyrant. Gibbon, perhaps the more readily on this account, commends "the wisdom of his administration and the purity of his manners." Dean Milman praises the "incomparable address as prompt as decisive," which he showed in the most trying situations. Finlay ("History of the Byzantine Empire," 1854) and Freeman ("History and Conquests of the Saracens," 1876) speak of him in still higher terms. The former indeed regards him as one of the unappreciated heroes of the world, the saviour of the eastern empire.

merits of the case) but one instance more of the truth of the observation, that a reforming movement rarely succeeds, if it begins with the government instead of the people.

The immediate results of the edict, and the part taken by John of Damascus, may be more conveniently reserved for a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ICONOCLASTIC CONTROVERSY.

THE religious discussions which preceded this stormy controversy have been briefly sketched in the foregoing chapter. A few words may be desirable by way of introduction to the present one, on the subject of *icons*, or *likenesses* (whether images or pictures), the destroyers of which were called iconoclasts. Apart from the natural instinct felt by all men to preserve some memorial, some token or likeness, of what they love and honour, it is probable that among the early Christians the custom of employing such means to keep present to their minds what they venerated, was partly suggested by pagan usages, partly in opposition to them. That is to say, as the disciple in Rome or Corinth would see on all sides the statues or paintings, or other works of art, in which the worship of heathen divinities had found its expression, he would be impelled, both by the secret power of imitation, and by the desire to confront paganism with what should conquer and surpass it in all that seemed beneficial, to devise something at once as an equivalent and a protest. Hence, at first no doubt in private houses, and afterwards in the churches that replaced the catacombs or private dwellings in which the believers first met in secrecy and fear, there came

to be seen the images of Christ and of His Mother, images of the saints, emblems of divine grace or operation, the dove for the Holy Spirit, the ark for the Church, the fish, as the letters of its name in Greek formed the initial letters of the name and title of Christ, the anchor of Christian hope, and so on. Such effigies were engraved on their signets, and drinking-cups, and tombs; and by-and-by were found on the walls of their churches as well. To trace the growth of this practice through successive generations would be beyond our limits: it may be sufficient to remark that it developed more slowly in the Western than in the Eastern branch of the Church. Coming at once to a time approaching that of John of Damascus, we find Gregory the Great (590–604) writing to a hermit who had applied to him on the subject, that he was well aware that his correspondent desired not the image of his Saviour, to worship it as God, but to kindle in him the love of Him whose image he beheld. "Neither do we," he added,[1] "prostrate ourselves before the image as before a Deity; but we adore Him, whom the symbol represents to our memory as born, or suffering, or seated on the throne."

There could have been small cause for dissension, if all who found comfort in a crucifix or a painting had kept themselves within these bounds. But even in the Western Church, and still more widely and rapidly in the Eastern, the actual practice, unless all testimony is to be discredited, went far beyond this.

[1] Neander, v., p. 275.

It had become usual "to fall down before images, to pray to them, to kiss them, to burn lights and incense in their honour, to adorn them with gems and precious metals, to lay the hand on them in swearing, and even to employ them as sponsors at baptism."[1] The miracles alleged to have been wrought by them were multiplied. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, when Leo's first edict was put forth, dwells particularly on this as a motive for retaining them in veneration. He specifies, in one of his letters, an image[2] of the Virgin at Sozopolis in Pisidia, from the hand of which unguents distilled. More famous still was the likeness of our Lord, said to have been borne by Ananias to Edessa, and placed by King Abgar in a niche over the city gate. There it was carefully concealed by the Bishop of Edessa, in the time of Abgar's grandson, with a lamp burning before it; and when, five centuries after this, the Persians had been

[1] Robertson, ii., p. 91.

[2] Gieseler, ii., p. 201. It should be observed that, while the terms "images" and "image-worship" are retained, for want of a better substitute, each of them requires some qualification. The "images" finally sanctioned in the seventh general council (the second of Nicæa, 786), "were not works of sculpture, but paintings and other representations on a flat surface; a limitation to which the Greek Church has ever since adhered." Robertson, ib., p. 164. We have also, as Dean Milman has observed, no words corresponding to the *proskunēsis* and *latreia* of the Greeks; the single term "worship" having to do duty both for the *honour* implied in the former, which the Greek divines allowed to be paid to their icons, and for the *service* or homage implied in the latter, which is due to God only. Of course the main question is, whether the multitude practically observed any such distinction.

repulsed by the hidden virtue of this picture, it was found, on being taken from its concealment, to have the lamp still burning before it. It was afterwards removed to Byzantium.[1] The rough mountaineer of Isauria, an emperor whose life had been spent chiefly in the camp, was not likely to listen with more patience to the recital of such fables, than our own Henry VIII. to accounts of the marvels wrought by the image of St. Mary of Walsingham or our Lady of Ipswich.

But our immediate concern is with the way in which John of Damascus took up the gauntlet thus thrown down. As soon, probably, as the news reached Syria, he drew up his first *Apology*, or discourse in defence of the sacred images, designed for circulation throughout the empire. In this he combated the position taken by the iconoclasts. To the objection drawn from the language of the Second Commandment, he replied that figures of the cherubim, and of animals and plants, were used to adorn the Temple, and that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." If the prohibition in that Second Commandment was directed, not against making such images, but worshipping them, then (he can reply) "I adore not the earthly material, but its Creator, who for my sake vouchsafed to dwell in an earthly tabernacle, and who by the earthly material wrought out my salvation."[2] With such a "relative

[1] The story is in Georgius Cedrenus, a monk of the eleventh century. See Mr. Wright's article on Abgar in the "Dictionary of Christian Literature."

[2] Neander, v., p. 286, where an abstract of the discourse is given.

honour and veneration,"[1] belonging to them in virtue of their associations, he declares that he will never cease honouring the earthly material by means of which his salvation had been effected. Or again, should it be urged that the images of Christ and the Virgin Mother would be sufficient for this purpose, he answers, that to forbid the rendering a share of the like honour to images of sainted men would be to disparage that human nature which Christ had exalted by His incarnation. "Why should not the saints, who have shared in the sufferings of Christ, share also, as His friends, even here upon earth, in His glory?" In this, in truth, lay the difference between the old dispensation and the new. Under the old, a man's death was but an occasion for mourning. No temple was dedicated to God under any man's name. But now the memory of the saints was held in honour, and the "mourning for a Jacob" changed into the "rejoicing for a Stephen."

Meanwhile the imperial edict was producing a greater ferment in men's minds than Leo himself had probably expected. The eruption of a volcano in the Ægæan, and the sudden throwing up of a volcanic island, was looked on as a token of the wrath of heaven against the suppressors of image-worship. In the Archipelago the influence of the

[1] The phrase is from the Rev. W. Palmer's "Dissertations on Subjects Relating to the Orthodox or Eastern-Catholic Communion," 1853, p. 265. Dissertation xviii. of that work is entitled: "Of the worship or veneration of icons and relics," and contains a skilful defence, though in the nature of special pleading, of the practice of the Eastern Church in this particular.

monks was great, and this was thrown into the scale against the emperor. An insurrection was raised in the Cyclades. A pretender to the throne was set up in the person of one Cosmas, and an ill-equipped fleet was sent against Constantinople.[1] Leo had no difficulty in suppressing the revolt, and the exasperation it produced only led him on to take still severer measures. In 730, or shortly before, he issued a second edict, in which, not content with forbidding the worship of images, or ordering them to be placed in such a position on the walls as not to invite adoration, he decreed the absolute unlawfulness of images in churches. Such as were found there were to be destroyed, and the vacant spaces where they had been were to be washed over. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, an old man of ninety-five, resigned his office sooner than obey this new edict, and was succeeded by his *syncellus*, or secretary, Anastasius.

On hearing of the deposition of Germanus, John of Damascus composed his second address. The immediate cause of it, he says at the beginning, was a want of perspicuity in the first—"on account of the first discourse being not very intelligible to the multitude." Possibly they found it less difficult to understand his meaning than to determine at once what ought to be done. John himself, whether still at the Caliph's Court in Damascus, or an inmate of the monastery of St. Sabas,[2] was within Saracen

[1] Robertson, ii., p. 94.

[2] To this period belongs the story of Leo's attempt to compass the ruin of John of Damascus by means of the forged letter before referred to. If we could trust the author of the

jurisdiction, and out of the emperor's reach; and in his boldness therefore there was not of necessity anything very heroic. But those who were more exposed to the imperial displeasure must often have felt themselves in a strait. As an instance of the height to which popular passions were roused, may be mentioned the destruction of the great statue of Christ standing over the Bronze Gate of the palace in Constantinople, and known by the name of the Surety, from a legend of its having once been a surety for a Christian sailor when forced to borrow money. This image, obnoxious to Leo from its prominent position and the superstitious veneration with which it was regarded, was doomed to destruction, and a soldier of the imperial guard mounted a ladder to remove it. A crowd of women thronged about him, with entreaties to spare it. When he struck his axe against the face of the image, they dragged down the ladder in fury, and the soldier was either killed by the fall, or, like a second Pentheus, torn in pieces by the infuriated women.[1]

"Life," John was then at Damascus. But Lequien conjectures that he must have been ordained before this controversy broke out (*Opp.* i. § 452). His reason for thinking so is, that in his sermon on the Annunciation, delivered after his ordination, he speaks of the Roman Empire as at peace. This, in Lequien's judgment, would not have been said after the iconoclastic storm had begun to rage. Whatever the argument is worth, it will hardly bear Gibbon out in saying (Ch. xlix. *not. in loc.*) "the legend [of the amputated hand] is famous; but his learned editor, father Lequien, *has unluckily proved* that St. John Damascenus was already a monk before the Iconoclast dispute."

[1] See an article in the *Christian Observer* for 1877, where Baronius's commendation of these "harridans" is discussed.

The house of the new patriarch, Anastasius, was attacked, and it was not without considerable bloodshed that order was restored. The statue was however removed—to be erected again at a later time by the Empress Irene—and a plain cross set up in the niche where it had stood. An inscription was added, in Greek iambics, as a testimony to the emperor's zeal:—

> "Enduring not that here a lifeless form,
> A speechless wooden image, smeared with paint,
> Should bear the name of Christ, our sov'ran lord
> Leo, and with him Constantine his son,
> Have carved this blessed emblem of the cross,
> Joy of the faithful, o'er the palace gates."

It was to minds thus excited that the remaining letters of John were addressed. His second and third discourses do not contain many fresh arguments; the third in particular being little more than a repetition of the other two; but he uses much stronger language in the second than in the first. It is the welfare of the *state*, he says, that is the concern of kings; the settlement of the church is for pastors and teachers. Without as yet going so far as to anathematise Leo, even praying that the necessity for such a step may be averted, he hints very plainly at such an issue in the turn he gives to a passage from St. Paul. Citing the words of Gal. i. 8, he significantly inserts the name of *king*:—"But though we, or an angel from heaven, *or a king*, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you"—and there stops short. "Shut your ears," he concludes,

"for I shrink as yet from saying what the divine apostle said, *let him be accursed* (Or. iii. c. 3).

The sequel of the iconoclastic disputes, as it only indirectly concerns our subject, may be very briefly dismissed. Rome from the first paid no heed to these edicts of the Byzantine emperor. Pope Germanus II. wrote to Leo a letter, in which, by some strange confusion, he compares him to *Uzziah*, who had broken the brazen serpent in pieces. In this he uses the most violent and contemptuous language towards Leo and his principles. "Go into the schools," he exclaims,[1] "where the children are learning to read and write, and tell them you are the persecutor of the images; they would instantly throw their tablets at your head, and the ignorant would teach you perforce what you would not learn from the wise." In 741 Leo was succeeded by his son Constantine Copronymus, a ruler of undoubted ability and as undoubted cruelty. He carried on the iconoclastic designs of his father with a kindred determination; and the scenes of violence and persecution that ensued are well-nigh enough to bear out the invectives that have been heaped upon him by monastic historians. The greatest palliation that can be found is in the mutinous, intemperate behaviour of the monks and other advocates of image-worship towards himself. A single instance, reminding us forcibly of Henry II. and Thomas à Becket, may serve as a specimen. An old monk named Stephanus, on whom banishment and torture could make no impression, had tried to

[1] Neander v., p. 291.

reflect upon the emperor's conduct, by throwing on the ground a coin bearing his image and stamping upon it. For this he was imprisoned afresh; but his act was applauded so warmly, that Constantine was driven to exclaim, "Am I, or is this monk, emperor of the world?" The words, just as in the parallel case from our own history, were caught up by eager courtiers. The prison in which Stephanus was confined was burst open, he himself was dragged through the streets by a rope tied to his heels till he was dead, and his body thrown into a receptacle for suicides and criminals.[1] Such proofs of indomitable resolution in his opponents may have convinced Copronymus that his hands would need strengthening by the support of church councils. Accordingly, in 754, he convened an assembly of bishops from his own dominions to the shores of the Bosphorus. The pope disregarded the summons, and would not attend; the patriarch of Constantinople (Anastasius) was dead; the other three patriarchates were under Mahometan sway. Still, an imposing array of three hundred and thirty-eight bishops was collected, and by their pliant decisions the iconoclastic principles were confirmed. The chief defenders of image-worship were anathematised by name; the old patriarch Germanus, George, metropolitan of Cyprus, and, above all, John of Damascus, being conspicuous objects of displeasure. "Anathema to Mansour," ran the sentence, "cursed favourer of the Saracens, traitorous worshipper of images, wronger of Jesus

[1] Robertson, ii., p. 105.

Christ, and disloyal to the empire! Anathema to Mansour, teacher of impiety, and bad interpreter of Scripture!" An additional insult was devised, by the emperor's causing his name to be written "Manzer," *bastard*,[1] instead of Mansour; a species of affront very popular at the time, and hardly less so since. It is difficult to believe that the bigotry of Constantine could carry him so far, as to ordain that, in place of the religious paintings removed from church walls, there should be substituted pictures of "birds and fruits, or scenes from the chase, the theatre, and the circus." Yet it is not easy to say what bounds a ruler of such a disposition would set to his imperious will, when provoked by the fanatical obstinacy of the opposing party. Even his ablest apologist cannot deny that in following out his purpose he was guilty of violent excesses, and that "when either policy or passion prompted him to order punishment to be inflicted, it was done with fearful severity."[2]

[1] "Instead of his grandfather's name, *Mansour*" (says Theophanes, "Chronographia," ed. Migne, p. 841), "which is by interpretation *ransomed*, he called the new doctor of the Church *Manzer*, with a Jewish meaning." The word is used in this form in the Vulgate of Deut. xxiii., 2, and in the Douay version taken from it:—"A mamzer, that is to say, one born of a prostitute, shall not enter into the church of the Lord." In a like spirit John had been nicknamed Sarabaita for Sabaita, and Jannes for Joannes; while he himself was not backward to miscall the iconoclastic bishops *episcotoi* (obscurantists) for *episcopoi*. Readers of Dr. Maitland will call to mind the many instances he brings of the fondness of the earlier Puritans for the same kind of thing.

[2] Finlay, "Byzantine Empire," i., p. 72. How difficult it is to discern the true character of the great actors in these times

But as the suppression of image-worship took its rise with the emperor, so it was liable to come to an end with any change in the occupant of the throne. Constantine had bound the inhabitants of Constantinople—according to some, all the inhabitants of his dominions—by an oath, to the observance of his decrees. But he died in 775, and his son, Leo IV., reigned but four years and a half. The empress-mother, Irene, was left as regent during the minority of her son, Constantine VI., a child of ten years old. Irene had been bound, like the rest, by her father-in-law's oath, but her mind was bent on undoing the religious work of his reign. Comparing the short interregnum of Leo IV. to that of our Edward VI., the task she set herself will appear not altogether unlike that undertaken by Queen Mary. Without entering into details concerning the opposition she had to overcome, or the prelates and soldiers she had to conciliate, it may suffice to say that in 787 a second council was assembled, by her direction, at Nicæa, at which the decrees of the iconoclastic council in the Heræum in 754 were revoked. It was now decided that, "even as the figure of the cross was honoured, so images of the Saviour and the Blessed Virgin, of angels and of saints, whether painted or mosaic, or of any other suitable material, are to be set up for kiss-

through the mists of partisan historians, may be inferred from the very sobriquet of *Copronymus* which they have succeeded in fastening on this emperor. Though as familiarly known to us by it as Caius by his nickname of Caligula, it was really meant for a most opprobrious epithet, based on a legend of his having fouled the baptismal font when an infant.

ing and other honourable reverence (*proskunēsis*), but not for that real service (*latreia*) which belongs to the Divine nature alone."[1] This council gradually came to be regarded, both by Greeks and Latins, as the seventh general council; and with its settlement of the question we may for the present take leave of the subject.

[1] Robertson, ii., p. 157.

PART II.

WRITINGS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "FONS SCIENTIÆ."

It is not easy to keep separate the life and works of an author, when he is known to us only by a collection of writings, admitting no settled order of chronology; and by vague traditions, suggested in many cases (as it is probable) by those writings. Of such a one it might almost be said that his written works constitute his life. So it is in a great measure with this Doctor of the Eastern Church. Had we possessed any complete or trustworthy account of him from independent sources, it would have been natural to relate the story of his life first, and then enter upon an investigation of his writings. But the events in which we can trace any active part taken by him are so few, and among those the controversy on image-worship holds so prominent a place, that it seemed most fitting to notice his three letters or discourses on that subject, in the account of the controversy just given. If we are to trust the accredited biography of John of Jerusalem, these letters also differ from all the rest of his writings in having been composed before his retirement to a monastery. There may

accordingly be the less impropriety in beginning our survey of the extant works[1] of John of Damascus with those which confessedly belong to his monastic life. Of these the first in order of importance is the "Fons Scientiæ," or "Source of Knowledge."

Under this title is comprised a group of three works, each complete in itself, but forming together an encyclopædia of Christian theology. They are (1) "Capita Philosophica," (2) "De Hæresibus Liber," (3) "Expositio accurata Fidei Orthodoxæ." The general title of "Source, or Well-Spring of Knowledge" (*Pegē Gnōseōs*) is given by the author himself, at the end of the second chapter of the first treatise, in which he says that his intention is to sketch out an epitome of all knowledge. To this end, he will first clear and strengthen the intellectual vision by help of the best philosophical system he knew, that of Aristotle; then he will pass in review the erroneous opinions of heretics, from the earliest times to his own; and lastly, he will set forth an exposition of divine truth. From the dedication to Cosmas,

[1] It may be mentioned that the first printed edition of any portion of Damascenus was that of a Latin version of the "De Fide Orthodoxa," by Jacobus Faber, in 1507. The first Greek edition in print was that of the same treatise, with additions, at Verona, in 1531. The first approach to a collected edition of the works, still only in a Latin translation, was that by Gravius of Bayeux, published at Cologne in 1546. Passing over other editions, we come to the great one of the French Dominican Lequien, in two vols., fol., Paris, 1712. This has been reprinted, with the addition of some doubtful pieces, in the series of the Abbé Migne, 3 vols., Paris, 1864; and it is to this that all references will be made.

Bishop of Maiuma, it would seem that the collective work was not finished, at least in its present form, before the year 743 ; that being the date assigned to Cosmas's consecration. We propose to give a short analysis of each of these three treatises.

The title of the first, "Capita Philosophica" (*Kephalaia Philosophica*), or "Heads of Philosophy," appears to indicate a wider scope than the extant treatise takes in. As it actually stands, the current heading, "Dialectica," really answers more accurately to it, as it consists of little more than a series of short chapters on the Categories of Aristotle, and on the Universals of Porphyry. If it is not to be regarded as one section or instalment of a larger work, we must conclude that Damascenus was content with so much only of philosophic introduction, as would fit his readers to judge the better between what was false and what was true—the subject matter of his next two divisions of the "Fons Scientiæ." For he says plainly enough (cap. iii.) that logic, or dialectic, is rather an instrument of philosophy than a division of it itself. And that he took no narrow view of the field of philosophy, is clear from the fanciful sixfold definition of it which he gives at the outset, and still more from his division of it into (1) Speculative, (2) Practical; these again being subdivided respectively into (1) Theology, Physiology (or Natural Science), and Mathematics ; (2) Ethics, Economics, and Politics. It is obvious, therefore, that by the title of this piece, assuming it to be complete, he can only have meant to give a summary of one department of philosophy. This is further evident from the contents of

the sixty-eight short chapters or sections, into which the work is divided. The nature of some of them may be gathered from the headings:—"On entity, substance, and accident," "On genus," "On species," "On predications," &c. It is, in fact, in the main, a summary of the Categories, together with the "Isagoge," or introduction to them, of Porphyry.

It would be impossible to make any detailed account of such a subject interesting to the readers for whom this little work is designed. But it is, at any rate, instructive to note, that we have here a Greek Christian of Palestine, in the eighth century, expounding one of the treatises of the Organon, and applying its methods to Christian doctrine. Boethius, in the fifth century, had translated into Latin all the treatises of which Aristotle's great work consists; but of these the "Analytics," the "Topics," and the "Elenchi Sophistici," seem to have lain in oblivion until the beginning of the twelfth century. The "Categories" and the "De Interpretatione," were practically the whole of Aristotle known in Europe during that long interval. If, then, we see John of Damascus familiar with one of these in the year 743, and making its method and application known by his "Dialectic," it should raise our opinion of the importance of his work in the history of philosophical inquiry. There has long been a tendency to overrate the services rendered by the Arabians to art and literature. The imagination is apt to be dazzled by the glories of Bagdad and Cordova; by stories of Al-Mansour and Haroun-al-Raschid. But John of Damascus wrote before Bagdad was

made the seat of empire. He preceded by a whole century the Arabic translators of Aristotle, Mésuch the physician, Honaïn his pupil, Isaac the son of Honaïn.[1] The great Syriac Lexicon of Bernstein shows, by the number of words of Greek formation it contains, how much the vernacular had been enriched by the contributions of writers like Damascenus, from the middle of the eighth century. It is this priority in time, along with the application of the Aristotelian method to Christian theology, that gives its value to the "Capita Philosophica."

The second work of this group is the "De Hæresibus Compendium," or Summary of Heresies. In this there is the least originality of the three, as it is little more than a transcript of a similar work by Epiphanius, in the fourth century, with some additions by Damascenus himself. In the introductory letter to Cosmas he had disclaimed all pretence to originality, so that we must not misjudge him. Epiphanius, in his work, had enumerated eighty sects, or heresies, beginning with what we should hardly class in such a list,—the four states of life mentioned by St. Paul (Col. iii. 11), as those of the Greek, the Jew, the Barbarian, and the Scythian. His last is that of the Massalians. This accordingly re-appears in the work of John of Damascus, and is followed by an appendix of some twenty-three or twenty-four more, drawn from Timotheus Presbyter, and others. The author himself makes the number to be just one hundred (p. 777);

[1] "La Belgique," tom. xii., p. 127. See also Mullinger's "University of Cambridge" (1873), p. 92.

but counting one or two doubtful ones, which may have been added by some later reviser, there are one hundred and three in all. The most interesting article in this latter portion, as well as the only one (with the exception of that on the Christianocategori, or Iconoclasts), which may probably be the work of Damascenus himself, is that on the Mahometans, whom he calls Ishmaelites. The arguments contained in it may be more conveniently noticed when we come to consider John's writings on this topic collectively. But we may observe, in passing, his odd derivation of the name Saracen. Tracing the origin of the race up to Hagar and Ishmael, who were sent *empty* away by *Sarah*, he deduces their name from two Greek words (*Sarrhas-kenoi*), signifying "Sarah's empty ones." Like Epiphanius, he concludes his summary of false beliefs by a profession of the true. Ever mindful of monophysite and monothelete disputes, which he had referred to even in his "Dialectic," he inserts a clause in this creed on the "one will, one action" in the three hypostases of the Godhead. The mystery of the Trinity he strives to illustrate by a parallel with the root, the branch, and the fruit, of a tree; or again, with fountain, river, and sea. At the end is added an injunction to worship (*proskunein*)[1] and honour the Holy Mother of God.

[1] The kind of worship implied by this word, as it will be remembered, is what the Greek Church allowed to be paid to saints, or to the holy images, and is carefully distinguished from *latreia*, the service due to God alone. The other word Damascenus uses in the text is a general term for honour or reverence. I mention this, because the writer in Ceillier's

The third and longest of the series, the "De Fide Orthodoxa," is perhaps the most important of all John's writings, and, in some respects one of the most important works that have come down to us from Christian antiquity. For it is the first complete "Body of Divinity" that we possess, and, as such, has had an influence that cannot easily be measured on the theology of the West. It was made known to the Latin Church by the version of Burgundio of Pisa. John of Brompton fixes the date with precision, by saying that the translation was made the same year that the Thames was frozen over—*i. e.*, in the Great Frost of 1150.[1] The statement that Peter Lombard had this version before him when preparing his "Book of the Sentences" thus becomes quite probable. Without, therefore, taking account of Aquinas, later on, whose indebtedness to the work of Damascenus is admittedly great, we have here a visible link of connection between the Eastern Church and the Western. In fact, the common division into four books, which the "De Fide" presents, is thought, not without good reason, to have been the work of transcribers seeking to make it harmonise more closely, even in outward form, with the popular textbook of Lombardus. The division into four books seems to have been a favourite one

"Histoire Générale" (1752), tom. xviii., p. 117, seems to draw an inference from the equivalence of the Latin words by which these two are rendered, and which he quotes :—"Nous devons adorer et honorer (car il met ces deux termes comme synonymes) la très-sainte Mère de Dieu."

[1] Twysden's "Decem Scriptores," p. 1036.

with the Latins for works of this class, as we may see by the "Sententiæ" of Bandinus; which resembled Peter the Lombard's so closely in form, that it has been disputed which of the two imitated the other.[1] The division of Damascenus himself is into one hundred chapters, possibly meant to correspond with the hundred sections of his "De Hæresibus Liber;" and a separation into four books really breaks the connection between chapters meant to be consecutive; as, for example, the forty-third and forty-fourth (on the providence of God, and on His foreknowledge).

Besides passages from Holy Scripture, which are largely quoted, though in a way that may often seem to us far-fetched, the chief quotations are from Gregory of Nazianzus, and his namesake of Nyssa, Basil, Chrysostom, Epiphanius, Nemesius, and some others. The writings ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite should not be left out; in particular, the "De Divinis Nominibus." In fact, the amount of his indebtedness to these and similar writers is greater than might at first sight be obvious, from his way of using their language at times without troubling to specify their names. Thus, for example, towards the end of the second chapter, when treating of the impossibility of knowing God, or comprehending the nature of the Incarnate Word, he has recourse to the illustration used by the Areopagite ("Div. Nom." c. ii.), namely, the walking upon the sea. The division into books being, as was said above, in all probability

[1] Gieseler, iii., p. 291, n.

an arbitrary one, not contemplated by the author, we are at liberty to classify the chapters in larger or smaller groups, according to the subjects. Down to the seventy-fifth chapter we can trace a fairly consistent plan; but in the remaining chapters it is difficult to distinguish any method or sequence of subject. The following may serve as an imperfect outline of the groundplan of the work :— [1]

(*a*) The impossibility of our knowing or comprehending God, who far transcends all human knowlege. The proof of God's existence; His essence, and unity (Chs. i.-v.).

(*b*) On the Trinity: the distinct personality of the Word and Holy Spirit (vi.-xiv.).

(*c*) On the creation: angels, demons; physical phenomena, such as light, fire, winds, &c. (xv.-xxiv.).

(*d*) On man: his creation in Paradise; his faculties and passions,—anger, fear, and the like: man's free will and God's predestination (xxv.-xliv.).

(*e*) On God's scheme for man's redemption (xlv.).

(*f*) On the Incarnation: the double nature of Christ: various topics in connection with that, such as Peter the Fuller's addition to the "Ter Sanctus," the meaning of the Dionysian phrase, *theandric* operation, and the like (xlvi.-lxiii.).

(*g*) Excursus on passions or affections to which human nature is subject (lxiv.-lxix.), apparently introductory to—

[1] Some use has been made, in this arrangement, of an article on John of Damascus in M'Clintock and Strong's Cyclopædia (New York, 1868, vol. iv.), in which an abstract of the "De Fide" forms the most prominent part.

(*h*) Our Lord's passion, death, and burial (lxx.-lxxii.).

(*i*) The descent into hell: the resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of the Father (lxxiii.-lxxv.).

(*k*) Answers to objections, chiefly on the double nature of Christ (lxxvi.-lxxxi.).

(*l*) On faith: baptism: praying to the east: the holy images: the Holy Scriptures,—and other miscellaneous subjects (lxxxii.-c.).

The above synopsis may enable the reader to form some slight idea of the course taken by the author in this great work, and of the extent of ground gone over. It would far exceed our present limits to attempt any detailed analysis of it. A few indications of his mode of treatment must suffice.

In what he says at the beginning on the existence and attributes of God, we may readily trace the influence of writings like those ascribed to Dionysius. That is to say, he proceeds by way of negation rather than of affirmation. God is uncreate, unchangeable, incorporeal, invisible, incomprehensible, and so on. Hence there is nothing that we can affirm of God beyond what has been revealed to us in Holy Scripture (c. ii.). As evidence of the existence of God, he points to the concurrent testimony of those who have had a revelation to guide them, in the Old and New Testament, and of those who have had but the light of nature, as we call it. Reason comes to the same conclusion. For all things that are, are either created or uncreated. If created, there must have been a Creator, that is,

God; if uncreated, there could be in them no liability to change or decay. But we witness the latter all around us. Therefore the other alternative must be the true one: the world has been created, and that proves a Creator. The order and regularity prevailing in the universe strengthens this conclusion (c. iii.). What follows is on the attributes of God; and in treating of this we have the same peculiarities as at the first. The negative method of shutting out false conceptions is pursued. "Whatever we say of God by way of affirmation," are his words, "shows not His nature, but only the surroundings of His nature. If you speak of Him as good, or just, or wise, or anything else, you are not expressing the nature of God, but only its surroundings. Some things there are spoken affirmatively of God, which have the force of negation in excess; as, for instance, when we speak of *darkness* with God, we do not mean positive darkness, but that which is *not light* from its being above light. So when we use the word *light* of Him, we mean the negation of darkness" (c. iv.). It will be noted that it is on the metaphysical or transcendental attributes of God that Damascenus dwells, rather than on the ethical. His arguments for the existence of a Son of God, and a Holy Spirit, may strike us as somewhat too much in the nature of inferences from words and names. The Fatherhood of God implies a Son. The Spirit must pertain to Him as necessarily as the breath (spirit) of man which is in his nostrils pertains to him (c. vii.). This Holy Spirit we may also call the Spirit of the Son, but we must not say that He is *from* the Son

in the same way that we say the Son is either of the Father or from the Father[1] (c. viii.).

The section on the Creation, beginning with bk. ii., opens with a discussion on the various meanings of the word "age" (*æon*, *seculum*). The motive for Creation was the exceeding goodness of the Almighty, which could not rest satified with self-contemplation, but sought for something external, to feel and be made partaker of that goodness (c. xvi.). Angels are incorporeal and immortal not by nature but by the gift of God. The Devil and his angels were created, at the first, good like the others, but fell by their own free-will and inclination to evil. They have no power to harm any one, except in so far as it is by God's permission (cc. xvii., xviii.). In his description of the physical universe which follows, we have a summary of the opinions popularly held, without any decision being given by Damascenus himself as to which he preferred. As some held, (referring to Aristotle and Ptolemy) the heavens encompassing the earth were spherical; as others held (for example, Chrysostom), they were hemispherical. This latter notion, familiar to us only as a poetical image, when we talk of the "vault of

[1] This refers of course to what has always been a tenet of the Greek Church, the single procession of the Holy Ghost. It did not preclude the expression "Spirit *of* the Son," or "Spirit *of* Christ" (as in Rom. viii. 9).—For a minute analysis of the Eastern doctrine on this subject, see Dissertation x., in Palmer's "Orthodox Communion," before quoted. The comments of Aquinas and other Latin doctors, on this and similar expressions of Damascenus, are quoted at length by Lequien in his note on this passage.

heaven," was gravely maintained by St. Chrysostom and others, partly on the strength of such passages as Isaiah xl., 22, "that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain" (where, instead of "curtain," the Septuagint has "chamber" or "vault"); and partly on the impossibility of there being "ends" of heaven, according to a common Scripture phrase, if the heaven were circular (c. xx.). In treating of the works of creation, he has an opportunity of showing the astronomical attainments which his biographer commended. The seven planets, and their order; the signs of the zodiac; the nature of the star that appeared to the Magi; the nature of air and winds and water—are all discussed in order. "Ocean" is the refluent stream, compassing the earth like a girdle, with which we are familiar from Homer. The four rivers of Paradise, parting away from this circumambient ocean-stream, are the Ganges, the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates (c. xxiii.). His measurements of the continents, which are given in stades, appear to be taken from Strabo. The "tree of life," and the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," he interprets in a manner purely allegorical. The former is an image of that contemplation of God, by virtue of which we can rise from things terrestrial to the great Artificer of them all; the latter, of that bodily nourishment and gratification which passes away into corruption.

Passing on to man (c. xxvi.), he gives what has been called a "psychology *in nuce*." Contrary to Plotinus, he makes the *mind* of man not a distinct element of his nature from the *soul*, but only the

most subtle and refined part of the soul. "For as an eye in the body, so is mind in the soul." The chapters which follow treat of man's faculties, and in particular of his freedom of will. The fall of man is the subject with which the third book begins (c. xlv.); but it is treated in a brief, rhetorical kind of way. Nothing is said as to the literal or figurative meaning of the act of our first parents; but some reflections on it, in an oratorical strain, are made to introduce the subject of Christ's incarnation. The personality and twofold nature of Christ are discussed at length, and with great dialectic skill. This naturally leads the author to one of his favourite topics, the monophysite doctrines; in handling which he relates the addition to the "Trisagion," or "Ter Sanctus," made by the monophysite patriarch of Alexandria, Peter the Fuller[1] (c. liv.). A fruitful source of error he declares to have been the confusion of *nature* with *personality* (*hypostasis*). A man consists of soul and body, which, when compared with each other, are as unlike as possible. And yet we can truly say, of any given man, that he has one common nature—human nature. Because, while there is an infinite number of individual men, and no two of them exactly alike, all these individual personalities (hypostases) are so far after the same pattern, that they all consist of soul and body. Hence it is allowable to speak of *one nature* in any particular man. But when the

[1] The surname of *Gnapheus*, Fuller or Cloth-dresser, was given him from the circumstance of his having worked at this employment when a monk. He lived in the reign of Anastasius (491–518).

same principle is applied by heretics to the twofold nature of Christ, and they would speak by parity of reasoning of his one nature, they err. For Christ is not an individual of a species. There is no other like him. And, therefore, it is not admissible to speak of one nature in him, in the same way as we can speak of the one (human) nature shared alike by two different human beings, each composite in himself, as Peter and Paul[1] (c. xlvii.). The flesh, or human nature, was present by way of *enhypostasis*[2] in the incarnate Word (c. liii.). The position held by the Virgin Mother comes in due course after this, and her right to the title *Theotokos*, or Mother of God, is strenuously defended. This had been made a battle-cry in the Greek Church ever since the days of Nestorius, when the churches at Constantinople rang with the applause of heated partisans, cheering the turgid eloquence of a Proclus in defence of the honour of Mary. Nestorius is assailed in no measured terms by John of Damascus for his endeavour to substitute *Mother of Christ* for *Mother of God* (c. lvi.). The nature of the twofold will and operation in Christ is then brought under review. As one illustration of it, he cites the passage where the divine and human will in Christ seem to manifest

[1] As *nature* (*physis*) is here distinguished from *person* or *personality* (*hypostasis*); so both are elsewhere distinguished by Damascenus from *ousia*, which he explains as the *species* to which various individuals belong (c. xlviii.)

[2] This may be more intelligible to some by its Latin equivalent in the Athanasian Creed, where Christ is declared to be "of a reasonable soul, and human flesh *subsisting*."

themselves diversely—the same which long afterwards formed the subject of an interesting discussion between Erasmus and Colet—the agony in Gethsemane, with its prayer "Not my will, but thine, be done" (c. lxii.). This leads to a consideration of the passions, or affections, of our nature, to which, as being sinless, Christ in His humanity could be subject. Such are the cravings of hunger and thirst, weariness and sorrow and fear. In like manner are we to understand the growth, or progress, made by Christ, when it is written that he "increased in wisdom and knowledge" (c. lxvi.). The feeling of human weakness suggests prayer. Thus it is natural to turn next to the Lord's Prayer. Christ's divine and holy mind needed nothing to raise it to communion with God. He needed not to ask anything of God, who was Himself God. But having taken upon Him our nature in its entirety, Jesus would give us this example of prayer. Such, it is added, was the reason for His praying given by Christ Himself at the raising of Lazarus (c. lxviii.). The reality of the human nature taken upon Him by Christ suggests the question of its corruptibility. He "saw no corruption" in the grave, but yet His body could not be called "incorruptible" till the resurrection; otherwise it would not have been truly our nature that He wore. The third book ends (c. lxxiii.) with a short section on the Descent into Hell, and the proclamation of a Redeemer there: "that unto Him every knee should bow, of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth."

The fourth book (c. lxxiv.) begins with the resur-

rection of Christ; the meaning of His eating and drinking with the disciples, namely, to show the truth and reality of His resurrection in the body; His sitting, but not in any literal or local sense, "at the right hand of the Father." Then follows a series of chapters (lxxvi.–lxxxi.) of a retrospective character, referring again to the double nature of Christ and his single personality. An answer is given to the objections of those who reason that, if there are two natures in the Christ whom we worship, one of which is human, we must be worshipping what is human—that is, a creature (c. lxxvi.). As has been before noticed, the remaining chapters are of a miscellaneous description, and cannot well be reduced to any systematic order. The eighty-second is headed "On Faith and Baptism," but should more properly be entitled "On Baptism" alone; the following one being "On Faith." The threefold immersion is considered to be a symbol of the three days during which Christ lay in the grave. "Remission of sins is given to all alike by means of baptism; but the grace of the Holy Spirit is given in proportion to their faith and previous purification." "Oil is employed at baptism, as signifying our anointing, and rendering us *Christ's* ('anointed ones'), and promising us God's mercy through the Holy Spirit; even as it was a branch of olive-tree that the dove brought to those who were saved from the deluge."[1] It is charac-

[1] According to the usage of the Greek Church, the candidate for baptism is anointed with simple oil, and then after baptism he is anointed again, this time with a chrism compounded of various unguents, as a token of the grace of con-

teristic of the writer, and of his time, that the section on Faith is much shorter than that on the Cross, which follows. The cross, he says, is the sign that distinguishes the Christian, as the seal of circumcision did the Jew. "It is that which raises up them that are fallen, strengthens them that stand, the staff of the weak . . . . the salvation of soul and body." Hence we should worship the manger, the grotto, the sepulchre, the very wood which bore Christ's suffering body. Even images of it, in whatever material, deserve the same. "Not that we pay this honour to the material object (God forbid!) but to the emblem, as a type of Christ." "For if the very dwelling, the bed, the clothing, of those whom we love is dear to us, how much more so should be the things belonging to God our Saviour?" (c. lxxxiv.) In our devotions we worship towards the East, for we turn to the rising of our "sun of righteousness," and we look with longing eyes to our native home, the Eden planted in the East, from which we are exiled for a time for our sins (c. lxxxv.).

The chapter on the sacraments is among the most important in the work. After reciting the goodness of God in creating man, and man's disobedience which cut him off from union with his Maker, the author briefly refers to the scheme for our redemption,

firmation, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. It may be observed that by the phrase *extreme unction* is properly meant *last* unction, *i.e.*, last of the various ones which a believer may receive during the course of his life; and not, as may sometimes be thought, an anointing only resorted to when a person is *in extremis*.

whereby we might once more become fit to enjoy the presence of God. Now, for a man to be raised to this new and better life, he needs the regeneration which shall be his birth into it, and the new food which shall sustain him in it. Both these are supplied us, and in a way to correspond to the two-fold wants of our nature. The double birth for that two-fold nature is in baptism; wherein, as our body rises from the water, our soul is quickened by the Holy Spirit. The double food for the same composite nature is in the Holy Eucharist; wherein the bread and wine refresh man's body; the outpouring of the Spirit, his soul. The institution of the Lord's Supper is then related. "After Christ had eaten the old Passover with His disciples, and thus fulfilled the old covenant, He washed the feet of His disciples, presenting therein a symbol of Holy Baptism. Then He brake the bread, and gave it to them, saying: *Take, eat, this is my body, broken on your behalf for remission of sins.* And in like manner he took the cup, of wine and water, and gave them to partake of it, saying:"—after which follow the words of consecration. It will be observed that Damascenus makes the washing of the disciples' feet to have been before, and not after, the institution of the Lord's Supper, and that he uses this inference to complete the parallel with baptism: also, that he speaks of wine and water, not wine alone, as that which Christ took. To express the way in which the consecrated elements become the Body and Blood of Christ, he uses the words *are changed* and *are turned*, and borrows an illustration from the natural processes of the human body. "As bread by eating,"

he writes, "and water by drinking, are turned in course of nature into the flesh and blood of the eater and drinker, and become not any other body than this latter; so the bread of oblation, and the wine and water, are supernaturally changed, through the invocation and coming of the Holy Spirit, into the body and blood of Christ, and are not two, but one and the same" (§ 270). The comparison, it may appear to some, falls short of its purpose. It is not made clearer how the deified Body of Christ, or Christ in His divine nature, so absorbs into Himself the consecrated elements, that they become one with Him. At the same time, something less than justice has been done, by a distinguished writer of our Church, to the way in which Damascenus here treats the subject. "What was worse still," says Waterland,[1] "after all these lengths of fancy, there was yet a difficulty remaining which was altogether insuperable. The elements were to be made the very deified body of Christ, like as the *personal* body in the womb had been made. How could this be, without the like *personal* union of the elements with the divinity? Here Damascen was plunged, and attempted not to get out, at that time, or in that work. But in another work,[2] in the way of a private letter, he did endeavour

[1] "Works" (Oxford, 1843), vol. iii., p. 199.

[2] "Epist. ad Zachariam" (in Migne's ed., vol. ii., pp. 401–412). The genuineness of this is doubted by Lequien, though Waterland thinks the evidence in favour of it. But the point to notice is, that this argument, which Waterland says was not thought of till the writing of the letter to Zacharias, really does appear in the "De Fide," as quoted above.

to surmount the difficulty by suggesting a new piece of subtilty, that like as a man's body takes in daily *additional* matter, and all becomes one and the same body, so our Lord's *personal* body takes in all the *new-made* bodies of the Eucharist; and thus, by a kind of growth or augmentation, all become one and the same personal body of Christ. A marvellous thought! But he was wedded to a new scheme." This "new scheme," of which Waterland makes John of Damascus a votary, was the cause of image-worship. Upon this, in fact, Waterland lays the blame of much of the innovation in theory which about this time began to prevail respecting the Holy Eucharist. "The bread and wine," Damascenus goes on to say (§ 271), "is not a *type* of the body and blood of Christ: God forbid! but the very deified body of the Lord." Commenting upon language like this, Waterland tells us that "the next time this new doctrine appeared upon the stage was in the service of image-worship, then creeping into the Church. They who opposed that innovation, kept up the ancient principle with regard to the elements of the Eucharist as *symbols*, *figures*, *images;* pleading that our Lord had left no visible image of Himself, His incarnation, passion, sacrifice, &c., but that of the Eucharist. In reply to that plea, the innovators remonstrated against the symbolical nature of the Eucharist, contending that the consecrated elements were no *images*, *types*, or *figures*, but the very body and blood of Christ, literally so."[1] Near as the language of Damascenus

[1] "Epist. ad Zachariam," p. 197.

may seem to go to the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, it is proper to add that, in its strict and technical sense, that doctrine could not be deduced from it.

So much space has been given to this important chapter of the "De Fide," that what remains must be briefly despatched. After a section in honour of the Virgin Mary, vindicating her right to the title of *Theotokos*, or Mother of God, the author passes on to a favourite subject with him, the worship of images (c. lxxxix). He meets the argument drawn from the absence of any direction for such worship in the Old Testament, by urging that it was the incarnation, the presence of God in visible form among men, that gave a motive and sanction for the practice. To make the life and actions of Jesus and his followers more intelligible to the ignorant, the Fathers of the Church,[1] he says, resolved to set them forth by this means, for the easier instruction of such as could not read. At the same time, John is careful to add that the honour we pay to images of the saints, or of the Holy Mother, or to the crucifix, is only an expression of the reverence we really feel for what they represent. The next chapter (c. xc.) is on Holy Scripture. The books of the Old Testament he makes to coincide in number with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet: that is to say, they amount to twenty-two, of which five are double ones, thus making twenty-seven in all,

[1] Lequien, in his note on the passage, admits that for the first three centuries such a use of images (so far at least as any adoration of them went) was unknown; and that in fact it did not begin to develope itself until the fifth century.

if counted separately. The double ones are: (1) Judges and Ruth; (2) First and Second Books of Kings (our I. Samuel and II. Samuel); (3) Third and Fourth Books of Kings (our I. Kings and II. Kings); (4) First and Second Books of Chronicles; (5) First and Second Books of Esdras (our Ezra and Nehemiah). The Book of Judith is not named by him, while Ecclesiasticus and the Book of Wisdom are not made canonical. In the New Testament his list agrees with our own, except that he adds to the number the *Apostolical Canons*, drawn up, as he supposes, by Clement. Returning to a subject discussed before—the twofold nature of Christ—he enquires into the application of various texts of Scripture to that doctrine. The origin of evil is then treated of, but at no great length; as also the Manichean theory of two co-ordinate principles, one good, the other bad (cc. xcii., xciii.) In what he says of the Sabbath (c. xcvi.), there are some striking remarks, coupled with much that is merely fanciful. God, knowing the coarse and fleshly nature of the people of Israel,[1] ordained for them this outward observance, that their slaves and cattle might rest as well as they. Had they been able to realise the higher position of sons, and not servants, of God, the Israelites would not have been thus commanded to set apart a fraction of their time for the special service of Him to whom they owed all. In this respect, as in others, *the law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless*

[1] In taking this tone, Damascenus may remind us of Dean Colet's "Letters to Radulphus" on the same subject.

and disobedient (1. Tim. i., 9); in evidence of which we may observe that Moses and Elijah, in their fasts of forty days, must have included Sabbaths, on which the law forbade men to fast. Hence he argues that, for the Christian, the letter of the precept is to be exchanged for the law of liberty. As circumcision is spiritualised for the Christian, so is the Sabbath; which he observes on the recurrence of that true and only perfect day of rest for humanity, that first day of the week, when Christ by his resurrection opened out for us the inheritance of the saints.

The subject of the next chapter (c. xcvii.) is Virginity; which Damascenus, as might be expected, exalts above the married state. Marriage is honourable, but the other excels it: the one is a human, the other an angelic, mode of life. From a comparison of Gen. vii., 7, "And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark," with Gen. viii., 16, "Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee"—he draws the strange inference (in which, however, he is not alone among ancient expositors), that a separation of sexes in the ark is pointed at by the order of the words in the former passage, to be discontinued on their leaving the ark.[1]

After two short chapters on Circumcision and Anti-Christ, the work ends with a final one (c. c.) on the Resurrection. In it he sums up the Scriptural argu

[1] The order in the eighteenth verse, in which their departure from the ark is mentioned, is the same as that in vii. 7; which seems to neutralize whatever force the inference might have had.

ments for a resurrection of the body, and for our personal identity being unchanged. The conclusions drawn by St. Paul from the analogy of nature (1. Cor., xv., 35–38) are repeated and enforced; and with the following words Damascenus concludes: "Wherefore we shall rise again, with our souls united again to their bodies, now made incorruptible and putting off decay, and shall stand before the dread tribunal of Christ. Then shall the Devil, and his angels, and that man of his, even Antichrist, and the ungodly and sinful, be delivered up to everlasting fire: not a material fire,[1] as with us, but such as will be known to God. But they that have done good shall shine forth, like the sun, unto eternal life, along withthe angels and with our Lord Jesus Christ; ever seeing Him and seen by Him; enjoying for evermore the happiness that comes from Him; praising Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for endless ages of ages. Amen."

Even such an outline as the above, brief and sketchy as it unavoidably is, may yet be considered by the reader as somewhat tedious. But the importance of the "De Fide," or rather, of that encyclopædic "Source of Knowledge" of which it is but one portion, should be borne in mind. And if it is remembered that we have here the earliest system, or *body*, of Christian theology, the precursor of the great works of Lombardus and Aquinas, we shall not grudge a little effort

[1] In the "Dialogus contra Manichæos" (Op. i., pp. 1505–1584), the nature of this fire is more plainly described. It is there said to be not material fire, but the unquenchable flame of sinful desire.

to obtain a passing survey of such a monument of Christian intellect in the eighth century.[1]

[1] I regret that I have not been able to meet with C. J. Lenström's "De expositione Fidei orthodoxæ," Upsalæ, 1839; the only work (so far as I can judge from its title) which is known to me as treating at all fully of this work of Damascenus. There is no copy in the British Museum library. The abstracts of the "De Fide" given in Ceillier and Herzog are necessarily very meagre.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE MAHOMETAN CONTROVERSY.

THE writings which John of Damascus has left on this subject are not so much of importance from their extent, as interesting to us from the nearness of the author to the time when Mahometanism arose. On this ground he is placed by Maracci[1] at the head of controversial writers against Mahomet. Besides the section (§ 101) in the "De Hæresibus Liber" before spoken of, on the *Superstition of the Ishmaelites*, we have two short dialogues or disputations between a Christian and a Saracen[2]—the term *Saracen* being used as synonymous with Ishmaelite and Agarene, to denote a descendant of that Agar who was sent "empty" away by Sarah. Hence the fanciful derivation of the name before noticed, as if it meant "Sarah's empty ones" (*Sarrhas kenoi.*)[3]

[1] "Prodromus ad refutationem Alcorani," Romæ, 1691.

[2] "Disputatio Christiani et Saraceni," vol. i., pp. 1585–1597, and another with the same title printed by Migne in the "Addenda," vol. iii., pp. 1336–1348.

[3] The most probable etymology of the word seems to be that which makes it simply denote "Orientals," from the Arabic word for *rising*; though Bochart prefers a root *saraka*, denoting to *plunder*. The reference to *Sarah* is not, however, entirely given up by modern authorities. See the article "Saraceni" in Smith's "Dictionary of Geography," and Lequien's note on i., p. 763.

Damascenus begins by saying that the Arabians whom he designates by the various appellations just mentioned, were idolaters down to the time of Heraclius. They were worshippers of the morning star, and of Venus, called in their own tongue *Chabar*, that is, great. This appears to be a correct statement, so far as it goes. "There is reason for believing that Sabeanism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies," says Sir William Muir,[1] "was in Arabia the earliest form of departure from the pure adoration of the deity. The book of Job, many historical notices, and certain early names in the Himyar dynasty, imply the prevalence of the system. . . . . In *Sura* liii. 49 is an evident allusion to the adoration of Al Shira, or Sirius." Whether the seven-times repeated encompassing of the Kaaba, or sacred stone of Mecca, by devotees in their worship, was meant to symbolize the revolution of the seven planets round the sun, is a disputed point. The mention of Venus accords with what Herodotus tells us of Aphrodite being known to the Arabians under the name of Alitta or Alilah.[2] The name is plainly identical with that of the goddess Lât, or Allât, found in *Sura* liii. "What think ye," Mahomet there asks, "of Allât and Al Uzzah, and Manah, the other third goddess?" Lât is said to have been the favourite idol of the tribe of Hawazun, dwelling to the south-east of Mecca.[3] The stone-worship, which was so

[1] "Life of Mahomet," 1858, i., p. ccxii. and note.

[2] Herod. i. 131 and iii. 8. Selden would read "Alilat" in both passages.

[3] Osborn's "Islam under the Arabs," 1876, p. 12.

remarkable a feature in the early religious systems of the peninsula, and which was modified, rather than extinguished, by Mahometanism, is not here joined by Damascenus to the two preceding idolatries. From the time of Heraclius, whose reign (611–641) covered the chief events of Mahomet's life, Damascenus goes on to say that these pagan superstitions were changed. The new prophet, happening to meet with the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and with a living expounder in the form of an Arian monk[1] (or, according to another reading, "with Hebrews, and so-called Christians, Arians and Nestorians") formed a composite system of his own from these various sources. God, according to the new religion, is the one Maker of all things, neither begotten nor begetting. Christ is the Word and Spirit of God, but a created being and a servant, born without man's intervention of Mary, who is identified with Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron.[2] Jesus was begotten of her by the Logos, or Word of God. He was a prophet of God. But what the Jews in their wickedness crucified was not Christ, but a mere shadow. This form of Docetism, it may be

[1] This statement may have arisen from the story of his meeting with the monk Bahîra, on one of his journeys into Syria. The story is discussed by Sir W. Muir in his "Life of Mahomet," i., p. 35.

[2] This is the inference commonly drawn from the words of the Koran, "Mary, the daughter of Imram" (*i.e.* Amram). Sale tries to save Mahomet from the reproach of so strange an anachronism by giving another interpretation to the passage. See his note on it in Sura iii., and also Sura xvi., *sub fin.*

observed, was devised long before Mahomet's time. The real Christ ascended without any such passage of death into heaven; and, when questioned by the Almighty as to whether he had given himself out to be the Son of God, and himself God, made answer: "God forbid! Thou knowest that I said it not, nor disdain to be Thy servant. Wicked men wrote this statement concerning me, and they lied and are deceived."[1] Such are the figments contained in that book of Mahomet, the Koran, which he pretends to have had delivered to him by God.

From this point the section in the "De Hæresibus Liber" takes a more directly controversial tone; the assertions of Mahometans, and the replies of Christians, being thrown into an argumentative form. It may be the simplest way of exhibiting these arguments, and showing the line taken by a Christian apologist in those days, to combine what we here find with the substance of the two short *Disputations*, and set down the result in the form of a debate between a Christian and a Mahometan.

CHR. You say that Mahomet had his commission directly from God. Now what evidence is there of this? We have the testimony of Moses and of a long series of prophets to the divine mission of Christ, and the events of his life are all clearly foretold in their writings. Why has the same evidence not been accorded to Mahomet?

[1] The substance of this passage is found near the end of Sura v.

MAH. God can do as seemeth Him best.

CHR. Undoubtedly he can. But if that is all that is to be said, tell us at any rate more particularly in what way your prophet received this communication from God, in which you say his scriptures were revealed to him.

MAH. They came down to him while sleeping.

CHR. Then, if so, one may fairly quote the old adage, and call them "such stuff as dreams are made of."[1]

MAH. Let us leave the question of evidence and come to doctrine. Why do you make a plurality in the Godhead, and earn your name of *Hetærists* ("Associators") by averring that Christ is the Son of God, and is God?

CHR. Because we find it so in the writings of the prophets, which you yourselves profess to receive, and in our own scriptures. Further, you yourselves admit that God has a Word and a Spirit. Now are these created or uncreated? external to God, or inherent in Him?

MAH. Suppose I say, uncreated and inherent?

CHR. Then you agree with me, for whatever is not created is God.

MAH. But if I say, created and external?

[1] If the passage is not incomplete as it stands—"the saying of the common proverb is fulfilled respecting him"—we must suppose the proverb to be assumed as too familiarly known to need quoting. Probably the allusion is to one of Lucian's, "You tell me dreams," given in Erasmus's "Adagia" under the heading "Vanitas" (ed. 1629, p. 701).

CHR. Then, as none but God could create them, there must have been a time when God was without Word and without Spirit. Take care that you leave us not an imperfect and mutilated Godhead, in your aversion from the principle of "Association."

MAH. But this is playing with the terms we use. You call your Scriptures the Word of God. You would not maintain by that that they too are uncreated.

CHR. No, for the term used to denote them is different. We call the Scriptures *rhemata*, not *logia*; and if in any passage (as in the Psalm: *The words of the Lord are pure words*) the latter term is employed, we account for it by saying that the writer is speaking figuratively, and not with literal precision. We apply not to the written word of Scripture the title due to the incarnate Word of God.

MAH. "Incarnate Word of God," you say. Now if this Christ of yours be God, how should we read of His eating and drinking, of His sleeping, of His crucifixion and death?

CHR. I answer: in respect of His human nature, taken from the Holy Virgin, he was subject to those affections, and did perform those acts. But in so far as He was the eternal Word of God, it was otherwise; for that part of his nature could not feel human weaknesses, could not sleep or die.

MAH. Does not your worship of Christ lead to idolatry? You adore the cross, a thing to us detestable.

CHR. You, at any rate, are not entitled to reproach us with idolatry. Do you not absolutely wear away

the stone in your Chabatha[1] with your kisses as devotees?

MAH. And with good reason, when the sacred associations of the spot are considered. That stone witnessed the nuptials of Abraham and Agar; to it Abraham bound his camel, when about to sacrifice Isaac.

CHR. His camel! why in Scripture (Gen. xxii. 5), we do but read of an ass, which he left some distance

[1] This refers to the famous stone in the Kaaba, or "Square," at Mecca, believed by Moslems to have been originally built by Seth, and rebuilt after the deluge by Abraham and Ishmael. "The black stone," says Ockley, "which the Mohammedans hold in great reverence, and believe to be one of the stones of paradise, which fell down with Adam from heaven, is a small stone set in silver and fixed in the south-east corner of the Kaaba, about four feet from the ground. It is said to be white within, but to have been turned black on the outside by the sins of the people, or more probably by the kisses of the pilgrims."—"Hist. of the Saracens," 1847, p. 3. According to another account the stone was brought to Ishmael by the angel Gabriel. Tradition said that the guardianship of the temple remained for many centuries in the hands of the Djorhomites, a tribe of Yemenite extraction. These in time neglected their charge, and about A.D. 206 the stone was dislodged from its place in the wall and buried. A Khozaite woman had witnessed its interment, and informed the chiefs of her tribe. It thus came into their custody till about A.D. 440. Its subsequent history, when it passed into the keeping of the Modharites, is told at length by Major Osborn, "Islam under the Arabs," p. 76, sqq. See also the "Vie de Mohammed," translated from the Arabic text of Abou'lféda by A. N. Des Vergers, 1837, p. 105. Mahomet's first impulse was to abolish this stone-worship; and it is interesting to speculate what might have ensued had he made Jerusalem his sacred centre, instead of Mecca with its Kaaba.

off, in charge of his young men. The place, moreover, was well wooded: at least, Abraham could cleave wood there for a burnt-offering; and this accords but ill with the situation of your Kaaba.

MAH. For all that, it is Abraham's stone.

CHR. Grant that it is; can you kiss it in devotion, because, forsooth, Abraham tied his camel to it, or even for some less decent association; and then blame us for bowing down before the cross of Christ?

MAH. This mention of the cross brings us to what you say of Christ's suffering. Now do you hold that those who do the will of God are good or bad?

CHR. I see your art. If I say good, you will tax me with approving the conduct of the Jews, who fulfilled the will of God in slaying Jesus: if bad, then I should seem to make Christ suffer unwillingly, or he too would come under that head.

MAH. Such was my meaning.

CHR. Then let us be clear about the meaning of this ambiguous term "will." I hold that it often stands for "toleration" or "long-suffering."

MAH. How so?

CHR. Suppose that God says, Thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not kill. As He is Almighty, His *will* cannot be baffled. Yet it is evident that either of us could, if we chose, rise up this very moment, and steal or kill. If this is so, then are we not bound to admit, that by God's *will* may sometimes be meant His endurance, and that in this sense the wicked may be doing what he endures, and so far fulfilling His will?

This may suffice as a specimen of the way in which

John of Damascus, or one of his disciples, might have argued with a Mahometan of his time. It should be stated that, while the substance of the various arguments is given above, an effort has been made to string them together more connectedly, and to soften off abrupt transitions. The latter part of the section in the "De Hæresibus Liber" consists of an invective against the immoral conduct of Mahomet himself, in the marriages he contracted, and the precepts in the Koran by which he strove to screen his own delinquencies while permitting indulgences to others. The special reference is to the subject-matter of the 4th Sura, and to the story of Zeid's wife, alluded to in Sura xxxiii. The monstrous legends also found in the Koran, or in the writings of its expounders, are held up to ridicule; such as that of the she-camel, spoken of in the 7th Sura, which drank up whole rivers, and could satisfy a whole tribe with its milk. In this instance, perhaps, the commentators have more to answer for than the Koran itself.

The least satisfactory feature, as some may think, in the aspect of religious controversy here presented to us, is the playing on words—for it scarcely deserves to be called by any better name. It seems a childish dilemma in which to place an opponent, to make him own that, if Christ, the Word of God, were not uncreated, there must have been a time when God was Wordless and Spiritless. We miss, also, what might fairly have been expected from the great champion of "image-worship," a justification of the limits within which the Christian might lawfully avail himself of images or symbols, as a help to devotion,

without being open to the charge of idolatry. Instead of this, he passes at once to the *tu quoque* argument of the conduct of Mahometans themselves at the Kaaba. The defect is supplied in a modern discussion, supposed to be held between a Mufti and a Christian priest,[1] which it is interesting to compare with this earlier one.

The Mufti has been indignantly repudiating the charge of idolatry brought against his own people, on the ground that they are in the habit of making prostrations before the entrance of their mosques, over which are inscribed certain verses of the Koran. This, he declares, is done, not by way of adoration to the written text, but as a means of elevating the mind of the worshipper to God.

Eh, bien! replies the Christian priest, l'usage que vous faites de ces signes est celui que nous faisons de nos images. Nous n'adorons pas les images; nous nous en servons pour mieux penser aux objets qu'elles représentent. Les images sont surtout le livre du peuple. Quand quelqu' un voit la croix, il se rappelle à l'instant la vie et la mort de Jésus-Christ, plus vite que toi et que moi, qui lisons l'Evangile.

MUPHTI. C'est ainsi?

PRÊTRE. Ni plus ni moins.

MUPHTI. Je t'assure que tu lèves un grand scandale à mes yeux. Maintenant, partout où j'irai, je dirai que les Chrétiens ne sont pas idolâtres.

[1] "Soirées de Carthage," par M. l'Abbé F. Bourgade, 1847. The author of this work, and its sequel, "La Clef du Koran," 1852, was almoner of the Chapel of St. Louis at Carthage.

The author, the Abbé Bourgade, assures us that this was the very answer he had from two Mahometans of Algiers, to whom he had given the same explanation, while they were one day discussing religious topics on board the *Josephine*, in 1846. To the ardent, but ill-informed mind of Mahomet, the nature of the first impressions he received from Christianity was a matter of the utmost importance. The apparently idolatrous character of Christian worship in his day was one grievous stumbling-block; the apparent obscuration of the unity of the Godhead was another. "Believe, therefore, in God and His apostles," are his words towards the end of the 4th Sura, "and say not there are three Gods. Forbear this; it will be better for you. God is but one God."

"It appears probable," says Sir William Muir,[1] "that the creed of the Christians of his day was understood by Mahomet to be, that Mary was one of the persons in the Trinity. This probably arose from the worship paid to the Virgin by the Eastern Churches, and from the statements of Mahomet's Jewish followers—themselves imperfectly acquainted with Christianity. Had the true doctrine," he adds, "regarding the Virgin Mary been rightly placed before Mahomet, together with that of the spiritual and eternal generation of the Son of God, and shown to be necessarily deducible from the legitimate construction of the Scriptures acknowledged by him to be inspired, could he have refused to approve those doctrines?"

[1] "The Koran," 1878, p. 179.

It raises, indeed, many sorrowful reflections, to think how greatly the history of the world might have been changed, had the Christian faith been presented to the mind of the Arabian enthusiast in a purer form. But, at any rate, the fact of there being such weak points must not be forgotten, and must be taken count of as we try to estimate the strength of the position taken up by John of Damascus.

CHAPTER IX.

SERMONS.

THE work of John of Damascus as a preacher does not fill any great space in the record left us of his labours. His biographer, in the vague manner which has disappointed us before, merely says in passing that he "moreover composed discourses for the joyous festivals" (c. xxxiii.); but when and where they were delivered, we are not told. In fact, the circumstance is mentioned before he relates his ordination; and the very word employed, which we have rendered "composed" (literally "put forth") leaves it doubtful whether the writer meant that John of Damascus really delivered them, or merely wrote them, as rhetorical or devotional exercises. The expression is such as might have been used by one who had glanced at this portion of his writings, and took no pains to go more deeply into the matter. When we examine the sermons themselves, there is not much more to satisfy us, in the way of exact information. In the title to one of them—that on the "Withered Fig-tree"—the author is styled "Priest of the Holy Resurrection of Christ our God;" and, coupling this with the statement that he was ordained by John, Bishop of Jerusalem, we may infer that he was then serving as priest of a church dedicated by that name in Jerusalem. From the language used in

another—on the "Transfiguration"—we might naturally conclude that it was delivered in the church built on Mount Tabor to commemorate that event. And, once more, from an expression which occurs in the second sermon on the "Passing of the Virgin Mary," we may suppose that he had continued his labour of preaching to the limits of old age. For he there speaks of "bringing flowers to the Queen in the winter of his eloquence, and preparing his aged speech to vie with others in pronouncing her encomiums." There being thus little to give any local colouring or accidental interest to the discourses, we must be content to study them simply as compositions, in which we may trace the reflection of the author's mind.[1]

[1] Under the general heading of "Homiliæ," there are included in Lequien's edition (Migne, vol. iii., pp. 544–816), thirteen discourses and a fragment of a fourteenth; the genuineness of some of them being more than doubtful. The first in order, and one of the most important, is that on the Transfiguration. The second, less striking in style, but in many respects a very interesting one, is on the Withered Fig Tree. The third, which has been sometimes included among the works of St. Chrysostom, though apparently without sufficient reason, is on Good Friday. The fourth, and longest of all, and one about the genuineness of which there can be no doubt, is on Holy Saturday. Then come two on the Annunciation; of which the first is only found in a Latin version, while the genuineness of both is discredited. Of the remaining seven two are on the Nativity of the Virgin Mary; three on her death, or "falling asleep;" one is a panegyric on St. Chrysostom; and the last a similar one on St. Barbara. The short fragment counted as a fourteenth piece hardly deserves separate notice, being probably only a fragment, in altered guise, of one of the sermons on the Nativity of the Virgin already mentioned.

The first in order, as we now have them, is that on the Transfiguration of our Lord. Lequien thinks that it was delivered in the church erected on Mount Tabor to commemorate that event. And certainly, though there does not appear to be anything in the language employed which absolutely requires it, this supposition would accord very well with the general tone of the discourse. Tabor, as is well known, was from the earliest ages believed to have been the scene of the Transfiguration. No mountain, it is agreed by all, could be more suitable for such an event, from its isolation, its solemn beauty, and the grandeur of the widespread view from its summit. But the ascertained fact that in our Saviour's time it was crowned by a Roman fortress, has caused this belief to be now given up. In the monastic ages, however, there was no misgiving on the subject. It was then a favourite resort for hermits. St. Jerome had spoken of it unhesitatingly as the scene; and thus "it was one of the shrines, from the earliest period, which pilgrims to the Holy Land regarded it as a sacred duty to honour with their presence and their prayers."[1] At the present day, both the Latin and Greek Christians maintain periodical services here. If it were indeed to a congregation gathered together on this mountain that St. John of Damascus spoke, his words must have come with vivid interest and power, as he thus began :—

"Come, ye assembly of God-loving people, and let

[1] Professor Hackett: Art. in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible."

us hold high festival this day. Come, and let us keep the feast this day along with the festal Powers above. For they are come hither to join in the festival with us. Come, let us raise the shout of joy with our lips, as with well-tuned cymbals. Come, let us exult in spirit. For to whom belong feast and solemnity? To whom belong joy and gladness, if not to them that fear the Lord, that worship the Trinity, that revere the Son and Holy Spirit with the Father co-eternal, that with heart and mind and mouth confess the Godhead revealed to us indivisibly in three Persons, that both know and affirm that Christ is the Son of God, and very God, revealed to us in two natures, without division and without confusion, and with their natural properties? For us is gladness and every festal joy. It is for us that Christ has ordained the festivals; for *there is no joy to the wicked.* Let us lay aside the cloud of every grief that darkens our mind, and suffers it not to be raised on high. Let us make light of all earthly things, for our citizenship is not on the earth. Let us direct our thoughts to heaven, *from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

The reader will not fail to be struck with the way in which the preacher brings the controverted topic of Christ's twofold nature even into this exordium. After enlarging on the same subject (c. ii.), he quotes the words of the Psalmist, *Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name;* and applies them in the usual manner. Hermon had its day of rejoicing when Christ was baptized in the neighbouring Jordan. Now Tabor has its day of honour, "that divine and

holy mountain, towering on high no less by its glory and splendour than by its cloud-capt loftiness. It vies with heaven in the grace conferred upon it. For while in heaven the very angels avail not to gaze unwaveringly on Christ, here the chosen apostles see Him shining forth in the glory of His kingdom. On this mountain an assurance is given of the resurrection of the dead; and Christ is shown to be Lord both of the quick and dead, by bringing forth as a witness Moses from the dead, and Elias still alive,—him who of old sped away to the celestial regions in his chariot of fire" (c. iii.). He then goes on to contrast Tabor and Sinai. When the law was given on Sinai, there was cloud and storm and darkness, all symbols of the impenetrable mystery in which the Divine Giver of the law was shrouded. But now, on Mount Tabor, all is full of light and radiance. For the Son is come from the bosom of the Father to reveal His glory. "And His countenance *shines as the sun;* for it beams forth in hypostatic union with immaterial light;[1] and hence He is become the Sun of righteousness. But His garments *are white as*

[1] This passage may serve as a specimen of the way in which the Greek text of Damascenus still needs revision. The reading here is φωτὶ γὰρ ἀΰλῳ ταυτίζεται καθ' ὑπόστασιν. In a fragment of a Catena on St. Matthew, given later on in the same volume of Migne's edition (col. 1408), it is φωτὶ γὰρ ἄλλῳ ταυτίζεται καθ' ὑπόστασιν. No one, I suppose, would hesitate to replace ἄλλῳ in the latter passage by ἀΰλῳ from the former, while for ταυτίζεται in both I have ventured to read αὐγάζεται. Even if ταυτίζεται could have the meaning of "is made identical with," that sense is not wanted; the following words sufficiently explaining what kind of union is meant.

snow; for they are glorified by their office of unfolding; not by being united with him, as that which is worn; not in the way of hypostatic union" (c. iv.). "Come, then," he continues, "let me set before you a repast of Holy Scripture, seasoned with the grace of the Spirit; not luxuriating in the arts of Grecian eloquence, seeing that I am not overmuch versed in the knowledge of it, but relying on the grace of Him who gives even the stammerer a clear tongue of utterance" (c. v.).

He then proceeds to relate the circumstances preceding the Transfiguration:—the question, *Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?* put to the disciples in Cæsarea Philippi, when He, the Great Teacher, "had taken a rock for His temporary chair, Himself the Rock of life;" the answer of Peter, and the like. It is to the faith by which St. Peter spoke that the words are applied—*on this rock I will build my church.* "This is the unwavering and unshaken faith, on which, as on a rock, the Church is founded; of which rock thou art become the namesake." But, though the words of Christ's promise are thus interpreted, not of the apostle personally, but of the faith shown in his answer, the language in which he is afterwards addressed is sufficiently lofty:—"For this peace of the Church do thou supplicate Christ, who is her spouse undefiled, who appointed thee to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven, who bestowed on thee the power of binding and loosing men's liabilities, whom with divine utterance thou proclaimedst Son of the living God. . . . . For in truth He is God and man; called the son, not of Peter,

nor of Paul, nor of Joseph, nor of any other father, but of man: for He had not a father on earth, who had not a mother in heaven" (c. vi.).

Reasons are next given for the use of the expression, "there are *some* standing here which shall not taste of death," &c., on the ground that if one only had been singled out, the words would have been interpreted in the same sense as the declaration in St. John xxi. 22, and referred to the survival of St. John; whereas if *all* had been used instead of *some*, the unworthy Iscariot would have been included (c. vii.). The apparent discrepancy between St. Matthew and St. Luke as to the time, "after *six* days" and "after *eight* days," is explained in the simple and natural way of supposing that one evangelist counts both extremes in, the other neither. But not content with this, the preacher goes on to display the symbolic properties of both these numbers in a way that reminds us of the *Numerorum Mysteria* of Petrus Bungus. *Six* is a perfect number, for it is made up of the sum of its factors, and *eight* is the number of the resurrection. In connection with this he quotes the beautiful application made by Nazianzen of the passage in Ecclesiastes (xi. 2), "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight"; where *seven*, the number of the week, is interpreted of the affairs of this life which demand our care, while *eight*, denoting the recurrence of the first day over again, is interpreted of the life to come, which also must have its portion in our thoughts (c. viii.). The reason for the choice of Peter, James, and John, to be witnesses of the Transfiguration, is then given; as also the reason of

a mountain being the chosen spot. A mountain, as rising high above the level of the earth, is a symbol of that charity, or love, which is the crowning Christian grace. To readers of the works bearing the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, this thought will be a familiar one. Through the successive stages of purification and illumination the soul must rise to its perfection; as through faith and hope we reach the empyrean summit of love. "Wherefore," St. John of Damascus continues, "we should leave to the earth what is earthy, and surmount this *body of our humiliation*, and borne on high to the lofty and divine watch-tower of love, there gaze on what had baffled our gaze. For he who has attained to the eminence of love, being in a measure out of himself, discerns the unseen, and by soaring above the gloom of this corporeal cloud that hovers over him, and reaching the clear upper air of the soul, fixes a more piercing gaze upon the Sun of Righteousness, even though unable as yet to be fully sated with the spectacle." And on the words *apart* and *to pray*, brought together by joining the accounts of the first and third evangelist, he adds the pithy comment, "For quietude is the mother of prayer; as prayer is the manifestation of divine glory" (c. x.). The Transfiguration itself was not an assuming of what Christ had not before, but a manifesting to the disciples of that which he had; their eyes being opened, so that, while hitherto but blind, they were now enabled to see (c. xii.). From the words, "his face did shine as the sun," he draws another illustration of the topic ever present to his thoughts, the twofold nature of

Christ. For light was in existence before the sun. "Even so Christ, being Light of light, eternal and unapproachable, came to dwell in a temporal and created body, and is thus one Sun of Righteousness, one Christ, revealed to us in two undivided natures" (c. xiii.). In describing the benefits that the chosen apostles would gain, by the sight of their predecessors in God's service, Moses and Elias, thus glorified, the preacher allows himself to be carried away for a moment from the patient task of the expositor :—"It was meet that they should see this glory and state of freedom of their own fellow-servants and ministers of God; and having seen it, be amazed at the loving condescension of their Master, and be more filled with zeal, and become nerved for the contest. For he who has seen what are to be the fruits of his labours, will most readily venture on the conflict. The desire of gain can tempt men to be unsparing of their bodies. For soldiers, and athletes, and husbandmen, and merchants, betake themselves cheerfully to their labours, risking the ocean billow, and heeding not wild beasts or robbers, that they may obtain the longed-for reward; and the more they see those who have toiled before them enjoying their gains, the more are they spurred on to endure hardships. Even so will the spiritual men-at-arms, and athletes, and husbandmen, and merchants of the Lord, who covet not earthly gains, nor aspire after fleeting honours, when with their own eyes they behold what they have stored up in expectation, and see those who have toiled before them realising the delights of the good things they had hoped for, gird themselves up more reso-

lutely to the encounter. Not against men, indeed, are they drawn up in battle array, nor do they beat the air; they bring not plough-oxen under the yoke, to cleave earth's furrows with them, nor sail over the briny sea. It is *against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world*, that they have to strive. In being beaten they rejoice; nakedness they count as riches. To the surging billows of the world, and to the spirits of wickedness that rouse them, they oppose the rudder of the cross. These latter they drive away in the might of the Holy Spirit, like roaring and ravening beasts of prey; while in men's hearts, as in so many furrows, they sow the word of godliness, and reap a manifold return for the Lord of the harvest" (c. xiv.).

On Peter's wish, *Let us make here three tabernacles*, &c., and the refusal of it, the preacher thus comments:—"If ye had remained on Mount Tabor, the promise made to thee, Peter, would not have had its fulfilment. For thou wouldst not have been made keeper of the keys of the Kingdom; paradise would not have been opened to the robber; the arrogant usurpation of death would not have been destroyed; the palaces of Hades would not have been given for a prey; patriarchs and prophets and just men would not have been released from the depths of hell; our nature would not have put on incorruption. If Adam had not sought to be as God before the time, he would have attained his desire. Seek not then what is good before the time, Peter. The days will come when thou wilt enjoy this vision unceasingly. Not tabernacles, but the world-wide church, did the

Lord ordain thee to set in order. Thy disciples, thy sheep, which the good chief pastor placed in thy charge, have brought thy words to their fulfilment, by erecting for Christ, and for his ministers Moses and Elias, the tabernacle wherein we now keep the feast" (c. xvi).

The *cloud* entered by the three was the antitype of that cloud and darkness which Moses entered at the giving of the law. For the law, as St. Paul writes, has *a shadow of good things to come.* Only on that former occasion the cloud was one of darkness; now it is a cloud of light. For the mystery hid from past generations was now revealed—that mystery which the law and the prophets had alike foretold. Hence the fitness of Moses and Elias being now present, one the representative of the law, the other of the prophets; one moreover representing the quick, and the other the dead (c. xvii). That voice from the cloud which proclaimed, *This is My beloved Son*, was the voice of Him who at the first saw all that He had made and pronounced it very good. "The good pleasure of the Father welded together in His only-begotten Son the connecting link of all. For if man is indeed the microcosm, bearing in himself the link which couples the visible universe with the invisible, being in fact both the one and the other; rightly was it well-pleasing to the Lord and Creator and Governor of all things, that in His only-begotten and consubstantial Son there should be made a connecting link of Godhead and manhood, and, through that, of the whole creation; that God might be all in all" (c. xvii).

In his exposition of the words *Hear ye Him*,

Damascenus takes occasion to run over the commandments, as being part of that divine utterance to which we are to listen; and he thus concludes: "These ordinances of God let us keep with all watchfulness, that we too may luxuriate in His divine beauty, and may have our fill in tasting His sweetness, both in this life, as far as is possible for those who are weighed down with this earthly tabernacle of the body, and hereafter in greater clearness and purity; when *the righteous shine forth as the sun*, and when, released from the constraints of the body, they will be as the angels, living imperishably with the Lord, in the great and glorious revelation from heaven of our Lord, and God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ Himself; to whom be glory and dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever. Amen."

The sermon on the Withered Fig-Tree, which follows, though considerably shorter than that on the Transfiguration, takes a wider sweep, and is not so close an exposition of its subject. From the title, it would appear to have been delivered in a "church of the Holy Resurrection," presumably in Jerusalem. At the outset, the preacher says that he was moved to utterance by "the subsistent Word of God the Father, who departed not from the bosom of the Father, and yet was conceived incomprehensibly in the Virgin's womb; who for my sake became what I am; who, though free from passions in His godhead, put on a human body of like passions with myself; who, while riding on the chariots of the cherubim, yet seated Himself, when on earth, upon the foal of

an ass" (c. i). And he then proceeds to speak more fully of Christ's incarnation.

It might not be obvious with what design the discourse was thus begun, or what was the association of thought in the preacher's mind. But as we advance we discern his leading idea to be, that, as Christ came to the fig-tree hungering for fruit, and found none, so He came to mankind, impelled by a divine yearning after them. Beyond the line of thought thus marked out, and what is necessary to elucidate it, there is very little in the way of comment or exposition of the text. With this clue, however, to the preacher's drift, the reader will have no difficulty in tracing the connection of the following passages: "We hated Him, and turned away from Him, becoming slaves to another. But He continued to have an unchangeable love for us. On this account He ran after us. He came to those who hated Him, He pursued those who fled from Him, and, when He overtook them, chastised them not in sternness nor brought them back with a scourge; but, as a good physician, when insulted, spit upon, beaten, by a patient in delirium, only applies remedies, so did He. And as a mighty work of healing, He applied His own Godhead to be a remedy of man's human nature —a remedy most efficacious, a remedy all-powerful." This rendered the weak flesh mightier than the powers unseen. For just as iron is unapproachable, when united with fire (*i.e.*, when made burning hot), even so the mere stubble of our nature, when united with the fire of the Godhead, has been made unapproachable to the devil. And, seeing that

physicians say that opposites are the cures of opposites,[1] Christ overthrows opposites by opposites; pleasure by labour, haughtiness by humiliation (c. ii). The intensity of Christ's love to man is next shown by His hungering early in the morning, as He returned from Bethany to Jerusalem. For we think of hunger rather as following hours of labour, than as felt at the opening of the day. Christ was not really in need of food, but the circumstances of the parable were adjusted to set forth its one central teaching. "He came, then, to the fig-tree, being an-hungered. The fig-tree was an emblem of human nature. The fruit of this tree is sweet, but its leaves are harsh, useless, and only fit for burning. Even so the nature of man had a most sweet fruit to bear, that of virtue, for which it was ordained to be prolific by God. And through its unfruitfulness in respect of virtue, it gained its harshness of leaves. For what is harsher than the cares of life?" In this way our first parents, when by their disobedience they lost that grace of God which covered them as a garment, *sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons.* They became environed, that is, with the cares and anxieties of a fallen life; for the decree had gone

[1] This, the opposite maxim to the *similia similibus curantur* of the homœopathist, was a favourite one with Dean Colet. "Let this be a settled and established maxim," he writes ("Lectures on Romans," 1873, p. 87), "that evil cannot be removed except by means of good . . . For whatever seeks to conquer must needs make itself as unlike as possible to that which it seeks to conquer, since victory is gained in every instance, not by what is like, but by what is unlike."

forth, *cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life* (c. iii). As an example of barren and ungrateful wordiness, which he compares to the profusion of leaves on the unfruitful fig-tree—rough leaves in place of sweet fruit—the preacher cites the harsh questions put to Jesus shortly afterwards by the chief priests and elders of the people (St. Matth. xxi. 23), who came to Him in the temple, and said: *By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?* "Behold," he cries, "their barrenness of spirit and unbelief! They ought to have said, 'Well done, good Master, for that Thou didst raise Lazarus after being dead four days, didst make the lame to walk, didst give the power of seeing to the blind, didst heal the bruised and wounded, didst drive away every infirmity, didst put the evil spirits to flight, and showedst the way of salvation.' But in place of this they ask, *By what authority doest thou these things?* . . . O wicked and faithless generation."

The explanation which John of Damascus gives a little later on of Christ's being the *chief corner stone* is noticeable. Instead of His being so called as joining and locking together in one the Jewish and Gentile worlds, as adjacent walls, he regards Him as performing that office for the two parts of the Church, the visible and the invisible, angels and men. "I will join the two hosts together, the things that are now separate, what is on earth and what is in heaven. Through me shall there be formed one Church, of angels and of men" (c. iv).

"Come then, brethren," he concludes, "as many as received the name of believers, who have been counted worthy to be called the people of Christ, let us not make our calling void, nor defile our faith by unseemly deeds. 'Tis not enough to be called a believer; let us manifest our faith by works . . . Let us remember the renunciation and the covenant which we made in baptism. We renounced the devil and his angels, and all his service. Let us keep our renouncing; let us not return again like the dog to his vomit." He then enumerates the works of the devil, which they should renounce; and the graces of the Spirit, which they should follow (c. vi); ending with the prayer: "Hold thou the dominion over my heart, O Lord, and keep it as Thine inheritance. Make Thou Thy dwelling in me, along with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Widen in me the cords of Thy tabernacle, even the operations of Thy most holy Spirit. For Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee, together with Thy Eternal Father and Thy quickening Spirit, now, henceforth, and for ever. Amen."

The third sermon is on Good Friday—*Sancta Parasceve*, the "day of preparation" for the Jewish Sabbath. In some manuscripts it is attributed to St. John Chrysostom, and was included in the works of that writer by Sir Henry Savile. Lequien seems to think it genuine, by asserting that it is wrongly ascribed to Chrysostom, and by introducing it in his own edition of Damascenus's works without further remark. I am bound to say that the style appears to me to show a higher order of eloquence than is found

in the confessedly genuine works of Damascenus.[1] But a few extracts may perhaps with propriety be given, if only to enable the reader to form some estimate for himself of the merits of this discourse.

He begins with a panegyric upon the cross, and the day on which Christ was crucified. "On this, the sixth day, Adam was formed. On this day he bore the likeness of God. On this day was established the microcosm in the macrocosm (*i.e.*, man, the "lesser universe" in the greater). On this day man, as pilot, had given to him the fair rudder of the world, a living creature that was to control all living creatures. On this day he received commandments to be willingly obeyed; on this, he fell from paradise; on this, he was brought into paradise again. Oh! day of vicissitudes, mournful, yet free from mourning. Oh! day fraught with sorrow at dawn, with gladness at eventide; nay, rather, a day that wounded not so much as it healed. Downcast I am, let me own it, as I recur to those disastrous deeds of old; as I hear of Adam expelled from his native home; from paradise its denizen, man. There had he found

[1] It would be out of place here to go into minute details of criticism. But I doubt whether Damascenus uses such terms as λοιπόν (= ἤδη) "now;" λευχειμονῶ "I rejoice" (lit. "am clad in white garments"), μονονουχί, and some others. There is also a conspicuous absence of that constant allusion to the twofold nature of Christ, and kindred topics, observed in Damascenus. The mention, too, of all peoples, nations and languages (col. 592), as observing the Lenten fast, would be less appropriate in the case of Damascenus, at a time when the world, especially his own quarter of it, was being overrun by the Saracens.

sustenance without labour, revelling in plenty without rain (Gen. ii., 5), needing for a livelihood neither the sweat of his brow, nor labour with the hoe, nor any toil; but with trees ever blossoming to give him delight, he could pass from flower to flower, from fruit to fruit, finding what he needed ever waiting upon his desires, and only at a loss on which object first to lay his hands, through the loveliness of all he saw." But, though the thought of such happiness forfeited makes him sad, yet the Christian associations of the day rekindle joy and gladness in his heart. For "look round on the habitable world, how many villages, how many cities, how many regions, how many nations, how many islands, rivers, shores, races, tribes, and languages there are; and yet all these are to-day keeping fast on account of the Cross; in its power crucifying their affections; and with many, even the end of night brings not an end to their painful abstinence. And now we are all assembled together to hear about the Cross, and throng the church, sweating and struggling as we crowd upon one another.[1] Those of us who are honoured with a front seat, when in the presence of earthly judges, are here glad to stand in presence of Jesus. For he stood for our sakes, to stem the torrent of wickedness" (c. ii.) The scene before Pilate's judgment-seat is then recounted, and its incidents dwelt upon. On the dream of Pilate's wife he comments thus:— "A second Joseph sees the truth through dreams, and bears witness against the clamour of the Jews.

[1] This little touch seems characteristic of St. Chrysostom.

It was fit that they should be beaten by women. Rahab, the harlot, beat them; the one with an issue of blood beat them; the Canaanitish woman beat them. And now once more a woman receives the crown of victory over them."

One more extract will suffice. It is from the close of the sermon, when he is speaking of the penitent thief on the cross. "I could have wished," he says, "to pass over the story, so often has it been related to you. But the robber is before my eyes, ever forcing me. And no marvel; for he forced even the gates of paradise, turning his robber's skill to his own preservation. There we behold standing on the Cross the Lamb between two wolves. But the one of them continued in his former mind, the other repented. *Remember me*, he said, *when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.* Oh! the power of Jesus. The robber is now a prophet, and this is his message from the cross: *Remember me, Lord, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.* Why, what emblems of royalty dost thou see, poor robber? buffetings, spittings, nails, the cross of wood, the scoffs of the Jews, and the lance of the soldier now bared for its work. 'Yea, but,' saith he, 'I see not these things that appear. I see angels standing around, I see the sun hiding its face, the veil of the temple rent, the earth shaking, the dead preparing to flee.' And Jesus, that receiveth all, even those who come at the eleventh hour to prophesy in his name, and giveth them all their penny, as being alike workers, saith to him *Amen.* Take thou too thy *Amen*, poor robber! to-day a robber, to-day a son. *To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* I, that cast

thee out, do bring thee in; even I, that shut the gates of paradise and barred them with a flaming sword. If I bring thee not in, the gates remain shut. Come hither to me, robber, that hast robbed the devil, and gained the crown of victory over him. For when thou sawest me as man, thou didst worship me as God. Thine old weapons thou hast flung away, but hast taken the shield of faith."

The fourth sermon, on Holy Saturday, or Easter Eve, is the longest of all, and is an important, though somewhat tedious one. About its genuineness, as Langen admits, there can be no doubt. Beginning with the question of the Psalmist, *Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can show forth all His praise?* the preacher replies that none can fully do so, though he should speak with the tongues of angels and of men. Such mysteries of divine love can only be accepted by faith; and to approach them becomingly, we need that purity of mind which the love and dread of God alone can give. This was symbolised by the putting off his sandals by Moses, a figure of the laying aside all dead and grovelling thoughts. "Let us then, my brethren," he proceeds, "purify ourselves from every earthly imagination, and from all the disturbance and confusion of life, that we may receive with unclouded vision the radiant splendours of the divine word, and have our souls nourished with the spiritual bread which is angels' food; and passing within the veil may learn clearly the divine passion of the passionless, even the salvation of the world" (c. i.). After a prayer for himself

and his hearers that they may *die unto sin* with Christ, resting as on that day in the stillness of the grave, he takes occasion from this very pause and intermission, as it were, in the work of Christ, to pass in review the whole system of God's dealings with man. This, while adding to the importance of the present homily, as conveying to us the views of Damascenus on many doctrinal matters, leads to a somewhat tedious prolixity.

Beginning at the very beginning, with the eternal existence of a Divine First Cause, God the Father, he passes on to speak of the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, and the relations between the persons of the Holy Trinity. "The Holy Ghost is of God and the Father, as proceeding from Him; and is also said to be *of the Son*, as being through Him made manifest and communicated to the created world, but not as having His existence from Him" (c. iv.).[1]

In describing the Creation, Damascenus gives free play to his exuberance of language. And though the effect is marred by the incongruous nature of the materials he works with,—old epic and dramatic

[1] The memorable addition of the words *filioque* to the Western creed, which involved the doctrine that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son in like manner as from the Father, is said to have been first made in 589, at the third Council of Toledo. The clause would appear to have been slipped in almost without opposition or comment at the time. The first open contention about it between the Greek and Latin churches began at the Council of Gentilly in 767, not many years after this sermon of Damascene's was delivered. See Lumby's "History of the Creeds," 1873, p. 85.

terms and forms of words blending promiscuously with the later vintage of philosophy and the Church —still, even under this truly Byzantine exterior, it is impossible not to admire the power and flexibility of the Greek tongue. "Of Himself," he thus begins, "God made out of what existed not both the angels, and the heaven, and the earth, and all that therein is. He made the empyrean, and the watery abyss; the atmosphere to be a storehouse for the winds, and the transparent vehicle of light. He made a second revolving canopy, the firmament resting on water, to divide the waters above from the waters beneath, even that which He called heaven. He made the blazing sun, the bringer of day and night in its two-fold chariot-course, the beacon-fire of the universe with its flashing rays; the moon also, that illumines the night, and tempers the ardent beams of the sun; those stars, moreover, that adorn the firmament. He made all things upon the earth; flowers of every kind and of varied uses, the herb bearing seed, and the fruitful trees, earth's fairest ornament. He made the living creatures of all kinds that swim in the waters, the great and prodigious whales, as well as the manifold species of reptiles, and winged birds, that have their birth in water, their flight in air, their food on land. Yet again, He made living creatures out of the earth, both the untamed wild beasts and the herds of domestic animals :—all alike to be an evidence of His own mighty working, and a feast for man to enjoy, who was to be made in the image of God" (c. v.). Then follows the story of the Temptation. The *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* may

have had its name, either because it was meant to test man's obedience, and would thus make his good or evil bias known; or because its fruit would impart to those who partook of it a knowledge of their own true nature.

The subject of God's plan for man's redemption, which is next discussed, leads to a digression on the twofold nature and will of Christ, in terms very similar to those employed in the "De Fide." By c. xix. Damascene comes back more directly to his subject. "*For since through man came death*, it was right also that through man should be given the resurrection from the dead. Seeing that a rational soul of its own free will wrought the transgression, it was right that a rational soul, of its natural and own free will, should work obedience to the Creator; and that Salvation should return through the same channels whereby Death had banished life, that Death might not deem himself a despot over man." This is followed by a singularly forced metaphor:— "And what was the issue of this? Death, after baiting for man with the hope of his becoming as God, was himself caught by the bait of proffered flesh; and after tasting a sinless body, became sick, and vomited forth, poor wretch, all the food that he had in his inside" (c. xx.). It is fair to say that such strained metaphors as this are not often found in our author, though he often errs in that direction. The passage which immediately follows, on the Crucifixion, is not a bad example of the forced antithesis, and striving after effect, which marks the decadence of a literature. "He who had fashioned man with

divine hands, stretched out His undefiled hands all day long *to a disobedient and gainsaying people*, and commended His Spirit into the hands of His Father. A lance pierces the side of Him who formed Eve out of the side of Adam, and opens the fountain of divine blood and water, the draught of immortality, the laver of regeneration. At this sight the sun was abashed, not enduring to see the intelligible Sun of Righteousness treated with insult. The earth did quake, being sprinkled with the blood of its Lord, and leapt for joy at its purification, as it shook off the defilement of idols' blood. Many that were dead rose from their sepulchres, foreshadowing the resurrection of Him who was being put to death for us. The sun was eclipsed, and rekindled its rays again, so as to make the number of three days spoken of by the Lord.[1] The veil of the temple was rent in twain, showing plainly the way of approach to the inner sanctuary, and the revelation of that which had been hidden. For now the robber was to enter paradise, and the Man who was *lifted up* as a malefactor, was

[1] This is explained more fully a little later on (c. xxvi.). Taking the words of St. Matt. xii., 40, in which our Lord quotes the illustration of Jonah, to require that his death should extend over parts of three days *and three nights*, Damascene thus computes them. The supernatural darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth, on the day of the Passion, was the first night, making, with the restored light that remained before sunset, one complete day. This would leave two successions of nights and days to follow before the resurrection. Zech. xiv. 6, 7, is quoted as harmonizing with this: "And it shall come to pass in that day that there shall not be light . . . . but at evening time it shall be light."

to be believed on and worshipped by every creature" (c. xxi.).

A figure of the cross is found, somewhat artificially, in the act of Moses, when bidden to *lift up* his rod and *stretch out* his hand over the sea; the uplifted rod, as it would seem, being meant for a type of the upright beam of the cross, and the outstretched arm for the transverse beam across it.[1] The reason why Christ should have been laid in a new sepulchre is thus stated: "But why is He laid in a *new* sepulchre, wherein no dead was ever yet laid? Methinks it was that the resurrection might not be supposed to have been that of any of its former occupants. For the men who thus looked with evil eye on their own salvation were ready for any device, and most prompt to disbelieve. And, therefore, that the resurrection of the Lord may be visibly and conspicuously displayed, He is buried in a new and unused tomb. He, the spiritual Rock of life, from which as it followed them the unmindful Israelites drank; He, the corner stone, not hewn with

This seems the true explanation of an obscure passage. Damascene's words are: "Does not the same Moses again smite the sea with his rod, and by the twofold manner of his stroke, the upright and the transverse, betoken the figure of the cross?" (c. xxv.) Lequien briefly refers to Exod. xiv. 27; but in that verse there is mention only of the stretching out of the hand over the sea. To complete the fanciful idea in the text, we want the mention of the uplifted rod as well, found in xiv. 16; unless indeed there has been some confusion in the writer's mind between this and the smiting the *rock* twice; as there is nothing in Exod. xiv. to suggest that Moses smote the sea.

hands, is buried in the hewn rock. Even so those souls that are soon broken and easily dissolved in pleasures, endure not to receive the divine Word. This is for those of sterner stuff, that are cast in manlier mould for virtue" (c. xxx.).

In the practical exhortation to his hearers with which he concludes, Damascene may possibly refer to the spread of Mahometanism around. "Let us strive then to multiply the talents committed to us, in proportion to our power. Let him that has received five, return to the giver five more besides; and let him that has been entrusted with two do the like. Let the one who has received the grace for this, stretch out a helping hand to them that need compassion, and that toil under the burden of poverty. Let another feed with the word of life those who are wasting in spiritual hunger, and parched with the hot blast of unbelief" (c. xxxiv.). The allusion in this last expression to the scorching wind of the desert, would make the words more expressive. In view of the approaching celebration of the Holy Eucharist on the morrow, he thus addresses them;—and the language he uses on this subject, as representing the Eastern Church, will not fail to be carefully noted:—"Let us who are bidden, array ourselves gloriously in the wedding garment, that we may be made partakers of the heavenly feast, and be owned worthy of our calling, and may share the fatted calf, and take our portion of the Paschal Lamb, and be filled with the new produce of the vine; even that which is now at the invocation truly and unspeakably changed from bread into the flesh

of God, and from wine into the blood of God" (c. xxxv.).[1]

His closing words are an exhortation to watchfulness, enforced by the parable of the Ten Virgins. "So watching," he ends, "with our lamps brightly burning, we shall go forth in bright array to meet the vanquisher of death, the immortal Bridegroom; and we shall be welcomed in the bridechamber undefiled, and with face unveiled shall look upon the glory of the Lord, and luxuriate in His beauty; with whom to the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, honour, adoration, and majesty, now, henceforth, and for ever. Amen."

After analysing so minutely the first four homilies, there is the less need to notice the others in detail. The next two in order are on the Annunciation.[2]

[1] What inferences can be drawn from Damascenus's use of the word "changed" (*μεταποιούμενον*) in this connection is a question that has been partly discussed above, p. 83 n. Petrie, commenting on the parallel passage in the "De Fide" (c. xiv) quotes him as saying, "By invocation, and by working of the Holy Ghost, the Bread and Wine and Water are supernaturally changed into the Body and Blood of Christ." "The Papishes," adds the old Scotsman, "make use of this testimony for their Transubstantiation; but there is also a supernatural change of the Water in Baptism, and yet no Transubstantiation; neither do the Greeks believe it to this day, but only a mystical change in regard of the use and effect."—"Compendious History of the Catholick Church," 1662, part i., p. 88.

[2] The first of these bears no number in Migne's edition, the next counting as the fifth of the series. For greater precision, I have reckoned them as the fifth and sixth, making fourteen in all.

The first of these exists only in an Arabic version, and that plainly defective and incomplete. A Latin translation from this was made by the Abbé Du Four de Longuerue for Lequien's edition, but the piece calls for no particular remark. According to Langen, the genuineness of it is very doubtful, while that of the next on the same subject cannot by any means be admitted. We should be sorry indeed to think that this latter of the two was by Damascene. After a short introduction, calling on all nations to rejoice at the good tidings, the homily, if such it can be called, is made up entirely of exclamatory sentences, each beginning with the first word of the angelic salutation, *Hail!* in slightly varied forms. It would be impossible to give, in an English version, any adequate conception of the turgid, affected style, with its compound epithets setting all the resources of lexicography at defiance.[1]

The five homilies which come next in order, are all on kindred subjects; two on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and three on her Assumption. The genuineness, at least of the first two of these—those on the Nativity—has been called in question; partly on the ground that the festival which gave occasion to them was not instituted till a later date. But there seems good authority for believing that the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (Sept. 8th) was observed in the Greek Church as early as the seventh century.[2] One account even makes it to have been appointed

[1] Within the space of three or four lines we have *οὐρανόφθαστος, παμβόητος, ἀγιόβλαστος.*

[2] Andreas Cretensis, quoted by Gieseler, ii. p. 313.

by Pope Sergius I., in 695. The growth of legendary fancies which led to that of the Assumption[1] was gradual and involved in much obscurity. The words of Symeon in St. Luke ii., 35, *Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also*, were understood by some at a very early period to imply that the Virgin Mary was to suffer martyrdom. Origen argued against this notion; pointing out that a material sword does not pierce the soul, but the body. Then, the very silence of Scripture respecting her end caused various legends to spring up. As early as the time of Epiphanius some held this silence to be a warrant for supposing that she had never really died, but had been taken to God, as Elias was. She was the Woman in the Apocalypse, pursued by the Dragon, to whom were given the wings of an eagle, that she should flee into the wilderness and escape him. A later form of the legend was that she had been buried in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and afterwards caught up into heaven. Gregory of Tours, in the sixth century, gave currency to a more circumstantial account, in which the apostles were said to have been summoned by a miraculous call from their various scenes of labour, to be present at the bedside of the Virgin on the eve of her departure. This story, by whomsoever invented, is related most fully and minutely by John of Damascus, or at any rate by the author of the

[1] "The term *assumptio* is used of the death of saints, without implying anything miraculous." Robertson: "Hist. of the Christian Church," vol. ii., p. 232 n. The statements in the text are based almost entirely on the authorities quoted by Gieseler and Robertson.

second of the three homilies on the Assumption. He cites it as contained in a history of Euthymius. As the only Euthymius who would naturally be called an historian was the Euthymius Zigabenus who lived in the reign of Alexius Comnenus, more than three centuries later, a good deal of doubt is thrown on this "Euthymiac History," and Cave goes so far as to consider the citation proof of a later authorship. However this may be, it is in this homily that the legend of the Assumption first appears in full detail. According to it, the Emperor Marcian, and Pulcheria, whose vow of perpetual virginity would interest her in the subject, sent to Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, to inquire what the end of the Virgin Mary had been. Juvenal, says the preacher, thus replied:[1]—"In the holy and divinely-inspired Scriptures, indeed, nothing is recorded of the departure of the Holy Mary, Mother of God. But from an ancient and most true tradition, we have received, that at the time of her glorious falling asleep all the holy apostles, who were going through the world for the salvation of the nations, borne aloft in a moment of time, came together to Jerusalem: and when they were near her they had a vision of angels, and divine melody was heard; and then with divine and more than heavenly melody she delivered her holy soul into the hands of God in an unspeakable manner. But that which had borne God, being

[1] The translation which follows is Mr. Meyrick's, from his article on Mary the Virgin, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. ii., p. 269. With a version by such a scholar ready made, it would be superfluous to translate the passage afresh.

carried with angelic and apostolic psalmody, with funeral rites, was deposited in a coffin at Gethsemane. In this place the chorus and singing of the angels continued three whole days. But after three days, on the angelic music ceasing, those of the apostles who were present opened the tomb; as one of them, Thomas, had been absent, and on his arrival wished to adore the body which had borne God. But her all-glorious body they could not find; but they found the linen clothes lying, and they were filled with an ineffable odour of sweetness which proceeded from them. Then they closed the coffin. And they were astonished at the mysterious wonder; and they came to no other conclusion than that He who had chosen to take flesh of the Virgin Mary, and to become a man, and be born of her—God the Word, the Lord of Glory—and had preserved her virginity after birth, was also pleased, after her departure, to honour her immaculate and unpolluted body with incorruption, and to translate her before the common resurrection of all men."[1] The special day (Aug. 15th) to be kept in memory of this passing of the Mother of the Lord, is said to have been fixed by the Emperor Maurice (A.D. 582–602).

The reader will now be in a position to understand the general drift of these homilies, and to anticipate

[1] The passage is at p. 748 of vol. iii. of Migne's ed. It should be added that in the "De Divinis Nominibus" of the Pseudo-Areopagita, cap. iii., mention is made of some of the apostles being assembled to witness the Virgin's decease, and that Hierotheus, the teacher of Dionysius, surpassed all the others in the divine hymns to which he then gave utterance.

the kind of handling which the subject receives. It is not easy, nor perhaps desirable, to reproduce much from them in an English dress. The subject, to a member of the Church of England, is a painful one. The style, to an English mind, is oppressively forced and exaggerated. Joachim and Anna, the traditional parents of the Virgin Mary, are addressed under every conceivable figure. "Rational pair of turtle-doves" is the most frequently recurring. The birth of their child is the bringing forth of a conch-shell, hereafter to contain the most precious of pearls. They are the planters of a vine destined to bear the fairest fruit. They are the rearers of a ladder that is to connect earth with heaven. If such are the terms applied to them, the language in which the Virgin herself is apostrophised may perhaps be imagined. There is hardly a metaphor in the Song of Solomon which is not pressed into the service. No doubt there are some good qualities brought into play by such a method. While modern commentators, especially of one particular school, are fond of reiterating a few texts, or, at any rate, resorting to a few portions of Holy Writ for their authorities, the older ones show a command of a far wider field. No book, either of the Old Testament or the New, is neglected by them. The correctness or propriety of their references may often be a matter of dispute; but the fact remains, that the minds of men like John of Damascus must have been saturated with the language of the Bible to a degree we can hardly realise. Dr. Neale[1] has

[1] "Mediæval Preachers," 1856, Introd. pp. xxv.–xxxi.

illustrated this subject by a comparison of the texts cited in two parallel discourses on the same topic, one by a mediæval preacher, the other by a modern divine. But this method of comparison alone would not give anything like an adequate idea of the difference. The Bible phraseology seems to come so naturally and spontaneously to the lips of the preacher in the former case, that his language is coloured by it in a manner no marginal references will indicate. It would indeed be a burden too great for any editor to have to analyse the expressions in such homilies as those now before us, and assign every word or sentence there quoted to its original author. To take but a single example from the first of the sermons on the Nativity of the Virgin (c. vi.). Among various metaphors by which the mother of the Lord is there described, one is taken from the words of the Psalm : *This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in.* As there is not a single marginal reference provided by the editor throughout this chapter, it might easily escape a reader even well acquainted with his English Bible, that the rest of the passage is a quotation from the same Psalm : *The mountain of God is a rich mountain, a mountain curdled as cheese, a rich mountain.* Nor is it without some consideration that we identify this with our own version : *The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan, an high hill, as the hill of Bashan.*[1] And just as the reader's

[1] Ps. lxviii. (in the Vulgate, lxvii.) 15. The Latin Vulgate agrees verbally with the Septuagint, of which the above is a literal translation. It is another instance of the confusion arising from words being treated in one version as proper names, and in another not.

eye might fail to detect this passing allusion, so might it be with him in innumerable instances. It is in truth no unprofitable exercise to study slowly and patiently the expositions of such a preacher as John of Damascus, if only to widen and deepen our acquaintance with the language of the Bible.

But after making this full allowance, and admitting with equal readiness the beauty—occasionally the very great beauty—of some of the figures employed, the fact remains that the subject itself is stifled beneath the load of embellishments with which it is overlaid.

The twelfth in order of the homilies, and the last which we shall notice here, is a panegyric on St. Chrysostom. There is a certain fitness in John surnamed Chrysorroas, from the golden flow of his eloquence, being the one to deliver an eulogy on "John of the golden mouth." And in the opening sentence the orator seems conscious of this, though he modestly disavows any equality with his task. With the name of his native river, it may be, the fair-flowing Chrysorroas, suggested to his mind by Chrysostom's name, he begins :—"They that would essay the task of pronouncing thy encomium, Golden Joannes, should have had the rare gift of a golden tongue to utter a stream of golden eloquence." But for some reason, the style of this discourse, especially towards the beginning, is laboured and obscure. There is not, so far as I am aware, any reason to doubt its genuineness; and the preacher has no temptation, as was the case with the sermons on the Virgin Mary, to

be led into regions of obscurity in the search for far-fetched and recondite allusions. But whether it be from a certain oppressive consciousness of the fame of his subject as a sacred orator, or from an effort to write on this occasion with more classic symmetry of form, the Greek is undoubtedly stiffer and more laboured than is usual with Damascene.

After praising the excellent nature that was in Chrysostom, his unwearied zeal, his orthodoxy (under which head he is praised for upholding what John of Damascus is never weary of adverting to—the twofold nature and double will of Christ), he continues :—"O that I had given me a tongue worthy of thy panegyric! O that I were brought back to that day of old time, when there beamed forth the divine fire under the likeness of tongues, and rested in one form and in many measures on each of the apostles, that there might be preached in diverse tongues the one unbroken doctrine of the faith! That doctrine brought together into one what had been separated, by doing away with the manifold error which they that built the tower in ancient days conspired to bring in, when they received the reward of their impiety in the confusion of tongues, and, through that, in divided counsels. O that I had a share of that tongue of the Spirit, so as to rehearse the more than human excellences of this man who was filled with the Spirit. I would bid an ocean of words then be ready at my call, and a profoundest depth of thoughts. But the grace of the Spirit yields not to words. For he who, without the Spirit, would declare the things of the Spirit, is as a man who chooses to see without

light, and has darkness for the guide of his vision" (c. iv.).

The more strictly biographical part of the discourse begins at c. viii., and this chapter may serve as a specimen of Damascene's style in handling what need be no more than simple narrative. In a plain English version it is not, of course, possible to convey the ornate character of the Greek. After describing Chrysostom's self-discipline in early youth, he proceeds;—"He now goes for instruction to Meletius, Patriarch of the Church at Antioch, a man adorned with very many divine graces, whose fame for holy living and teaching was in every one's mouth. He received him when now about the age of eighteen, and became enamoured of the lovely qualities of his heart. Foreseeing with prophetic eye the youth's future career, he grounded him in the doctrines of religion, and gave a serious tone to his character and manners, and after tracing in him the fair outlines of truth, thus at length by the laver of regeneration portrayed in him the image of Christ, *fairer than the children of men*, as shining forth with the beauty of the Godhead. He was about thirty years of age, and thus arrived at the perfection both of his bodily and spiritual stature, when, after being promoted to the rank of reader and teacher of the divine oracles, under the impulse of heavenly love he removed his dwelling to the desert. He sought to wither up the ever-swelling, ever-fermenting lusts of the flesh, that the higher nature might not be enslaved by the lower. For these do both lust, the one against the other, and the decay of the bodily

tabernacle gives, as is meet, the supremacy to the soul. And so, resorting to the mountains hard by, he was led to an old man, of Syrian speech but of no mean knowledge, who had reached the heights of philosophic self-control. For four years he took the pattern of austerity from him; and after easily gaining the mastery over every kind of indulgence, since he had reason for his companion in the strife, he longed for seclusion, and became a dweller in a remote spot, delighting to have a cave for his resort, the gymnasium and arena of his virtue. What struggles did he here undergo, receiving the comfort of the Spirit in proportion to the multitude of his pains! What steps of ascent to the Spirit did he lay and prepare in his heart, as he went forward from strength to strength, and by means of work and contemplation both, exterminated from his soul and body every device of Egypt."[1]

It is not our object here to follow the events of Chrysostom's life, even in the shadowy outline presented to us in this encomium. How extremely shadowy the outline is, may be inferred from the following passage, in which it will be observed that a brief allusion, in one single line, is all that is given to

[1] A good deal of this is taken, with but little alteration, from the contemporary account of Palladius, Bishop of Helenopolis. The English reader may verify this by comparing with the above passage the extracts from Palladius quoted in the account of St. Chrysostom in the "Dictionary of Christian Biography," vol. i., pp. 519–20. The original will be found in Gallandius: "Biblioth. Vet. Patr." viii., p. 271. That there should be no hint of this in Lequien's edition, is one proof how much is still wanting to supplement that edition, meritorious as it is.

John's ministrations at Antioch; while his elevation to the see of Constantinople is described—if description it can be called—in language so metaphorical that it costs the reader some little pains to get at the facts implied. "And so," the account continues (c. ix.), "after spending two years in the cave, keeping his soul as well as his body in sleepless watch, and engrossed, as if set free from the flesh, in the study of the divine oracles, he banished all ignorance and gave admission to the light of the true knowledge. And if he was forced to take some measure of sleep for nature's recovery and refreshment, he discharged this duty to nature in such a degree only, as not once to lie down, either by night or by day, during those two years." In this way his bodily passions were subdued. "Then returning back again to his native place (Antioch), and coming to be in the rank of a presbyter of the Church, he repaid the cost of his maintenance, like a grateful son, to the mother who had nursed him. And then, in God's providence, he was transferred to the empress of cities (Constantinople), and married the daughter of the great High-priest" (c. x.).

We have to recall the words of the Psalmist about the "King's daughter, all glorious within" (Ps. xlv. 13), before we perceive this last sentence to mean that Chrysostom became bishop of the Imperial Church of Constantinople, which he thus espoused as a bride.[1] And, in general, we may say of the homilies

[1] Damascene has no excuse for this high-flown style in the passage of Palladius, which is clearly his authority. That writer simply says: "He is thus brought and elected Bishop of the Church of Constantinople." Gallandius, *ubi. sup.*, p. 272.

of John of Damascus, in closing this review of them, that while they show a marvellous familiarity with the language of Holy Scripture, and are at times lit up with flashes of real eloquence, they leave a vague sense of unreality behind them, from the way in which facts are alluded to instead of being plainly stated, and from the constant preference of the mystical sense to the literal.

CHAPTER X.

HYMNS.

UNDER the general title of hymns it is convenient to include all Damascene's poetical compositions, as they are all on sacred subjects. But the reader must not be misled by the term. With us the word is suggestive of metre and rhyme. But in the Eastern Church it is properly applied to such passages from the bible as the Angels' Song (St. Luke ii. 14), *Glory to God in the highest, etc.*, hence called the Angelic Hymn; the Song of the Seraphim (Is. vi. 3), known as the Tersanctus; and the like.[1] In the Latin Church the term is extended to include Introits, Graduals, and other sentences for singing. It will thus be seen that, in speaking of St. John of Damascus as the "chief of the Greek Hymnodists,"[2] we must not form our conception of his work in that department from modern hymnology. In point of fact, the extant pieces which have gained for him that proud title are but few in number;[3] and of these the

[1] See the Glossaries to Hammond's "Liturgies Eastern and Western" (1878), and Littledale's "Offices . . of the Eastern Church" (1863), under the word "Hymnus."

[2] Littledale, p. 278. To the same effect the late Dr. Neale, in his "Hymns of the Eastern Church," third ed., p. 31.

[3] In Lequien's original edition, under the heading "Carmina,"

majority are not in verse at all, but in rhythmical prose. A few words of explanation may be desirable to enable the reader to understand the nature of these prose hymns.[1]

In the Early Church, when forms adapted for singing began to be required, a difficulty must have been experienced from the very outset as to the metre or measure in which they were to be composed. Probably the earliest of all were in a kind of measured prose, such as the one quoted in Eph. v. 14:—

> "Awake, thou that sleepest,
> And arise from the dead,
> And Christ shall give thee light."

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were given (1) three hymns in iambic metre, on the "Theogonia," or Birth of Christ, the "Theophania," or Epiphany, and the "Pentecost," respectively; (2) four canons, on "Easter," the "Ascension," the "Transfiguration," and the "Annunciation;" and (3) a Prayer in so-called anacreontics. These occupy pp. 817–856 of vol. iii. of Migne's edition; and there are added to them, as an appendix (pp. 1364–1408), (1) a canon on the passing of the Virgin Mary; (2) stanzas ("Idiomela") used in the Office for Burial of the Dead; and (3) six canons found by Cardinal Mai in a MS. in the Vatican. There are thus, in all, four pieces in classical metres; one set of verses on no fixed pattern, hence called "Idiomela;" and eleven canons or hymns in rhythmical prose. No doubt the number might be largely increased.

[1] The description which follows is taken entirely from Dr. Neale's "History of the Holy Eastern Church," part i. (General Introduction), 1850, Bk. iv., c. iii.; and from the Introduction to his "Hymns of the Eastern Church" before mentioned. While not able to share Dr. Neale's views on the Eastern Church, in many respects, I must bear my tribute of

When more strictly metrical compositions were desired, the question of their metre would not be easily settled. There were of course, ready to hand, the familiar classical metres of Greece and Rome. But one of the chief of these, the hexameter, in which the great poems of Homer and Virgil were written, was unsuited to Western use for various reasons. In the first place, it was not truly a native of Italy. It was an exotic, introduced into the Latin language by writers who avowedly took the Greek poets as their models. In the next place, a large number of words, and those of the most frequent occurrence in Christian worship, could not be admitted into this metre without violating its laws. Once more, the power of old associations would have been a dangerous element to reckon with, if the mythology of heathen Greece and Rome had been suggested—as it could hardly have failed to be suggested—by the words and phrases unavoidably used, and even by the very roll of the hexameter itself. The same objections would apply, in varying degrees, to other well-known metres, such as those lyric ones of Greece to which Horace, with consummate skill, had bent the more stubborn genius of the Latin. Hence different expedients were resorted to, to avoid the difficulty. In the Western Church there was a strong tendency to revert to the old popular metre of Italy, its own genuine product, known as the Saturnian. This,

respectful admiration to the learning and unbounded industry which have made his work the chief English authority on this subject. As such, it is frequently quoted by Daniel in the fourth volume of his "Codex Liturgicus."

though made unfashionable for a time in the Roman literary world by the preference shown to the Greek, had probably never died out, nor ceased to enshrine the songs of the people.[1] Hence, its use in church hymnody would be a revival rather than a novelty, and would appeal with genial force to the national sentiment.

In the Greek Church, as the metres borrowed by Virgil and Horace were indigenous, they had, as might be expected, a longer struggle for existence. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, wrote in the ordinary classical metres; and his iambics have much of the Attic grace and spirit in them. But even against the iambic metre, as framed on strict rules, there were objections ever growing in strength. Its use brought back the associations of the Attic stage. The increasing power of accent over quantity made it more and more inconvenient to conform to its proper laws. On the other hand, the Greek language, in this its period of decadence, had not, for various reasons, the resource which its sister tongue possessed and developed so freely—that of rhyme. And hence, as a matter of fact, by the beginning of the eighth century, the use of verse had in the great

[1] See on this subject the introduction to Trench's "Sacred Latin Poetry," and also that to Kynaston's "Miscellaneous Poems." The lines in this metre were scanned by accent, as is the case in modern languages, without regard to the quantity of the syllables. The following stanza will give a good idea of the Saturnian metre :—

"Go fetch my sword, Excalibar, | Go saddle me my steed,
Now by my faye that grim baron | Shall rue this ruthful deed."

majority of cases given way to that of rhythmical prose.

The completest form in which these prose hymns are found is that of the canon. A canon properly consists of nine odes, and each ode is divided into a varying number of stanzas—if these short sentences, or groups of sentences, without rhyme, can be properly so called—termed "troparia." The number of troparia in an ode is often five, sometimes less. Those in each ode follow the pattern of one, sometimes printed at the beginning of the ode, sometimes at the end; but in the Greek service-books always distinguished by inverted commas, called a "hirmos." As the hirmos takes its name from "drawing" the others after it, so the ensuing troparia are so called from their "turning" towards it as their model. One or two examples of verses selected from the English version of the Psalms, which happen to correspond in rhythm, are given by Dr. Neale in illustration of this peculiarity of the Greek canon. Thus, if verse 13 of the cxixth Psalm be taken as a hirmos :—

> "I will talk of Thy commandments :
> and have respect unto Thy ways."

then as troparia to it, or verses presenting the same rhythm (in this case an almost complete trochaic), the following would be found to correspond :—

> "With my lips have I been telling :
> of all the judgments of Thy mouth."
> (cxix. 15.)
>
> "O do well unto Thy servant :
> that I may live, and keep Thy word."
> (cxix. 17.)

"When the Lord shall build up Sion:
and when His glory shall appear."
(cii. 16.)

Such a series of troparia as the above, not limited to three, but not as a rule exceeding five, would constitute an ode. The last troparion in each ode being to the praise of the Holy Virgin, as the *Theotokos*, or Mother of God, is entitled *Theotokion*. Nine such odes make a canon; the number nine being interpreted as a three-fold repetition of the number of Persons in the Blessed Trinity. Moreover, as an assistance to the memory, these canons are often acrostichal. That is, each troparion begins with one of the letters, taken in order, of a line or lines (usually iambic), prefixed to the canon, and having reference to its subject. The alphabetic arrangement of the cxixth Psalm will make this more intelligible to the reader. If, for example (to take the illustration provided by Dr. Neale), the acrostich were:—

"To rev'rend athletes pour a rev'rend song,"

(that being a literal rendering of one of the headings in the service-book, and coinciding in the number of letters), then the troparia of the odes in succession would begin with the letters T., O., R., and so on to the end.

Some little notion may be thus formed of the nature of Greek hymnody in this particular department. It will be seen how widely it differs from the system on which the great hymns of the Latin Church, whether rhyming or not, are composed;

and how much less congenial it is to the spirit of our own hymnody. In the freedom which measured prose allows, checked at the same time by the necessity of correspondence between the hirmos and its troparia, we have something more nearly analogous to the strophe and antistrophe of a Greek choral ode, than to anything in modern poetry. The most famous of these canons is that for Easter Day, the first in order of those remaining to us under the name of St. John of Damascus.[1] It is a lasting glory to any Christian poet to have furnished the song of triumph and thanksgiving with which this greatest of days in the Church's year is celebrated. And in the Greek Church there are circumstances which render the services on this day peculiarly impressive. The Latin solemnities at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the wild excitement of the sudden change from darkness to light—the light of innumerable tapers kindled in swift succession—are well known. Not less striking are the accompaniments of Easter Day, as it is ushered in at Athens for example, with the roll of drums, the firing of cannon, the sudden blaze of countless lights, and the chanting of what an eye-witness describes as a "glorious old hymn of victory." The beginning of this "glorious old hymn of victory," the Easter Hymn

[1] As printed in Lequien's edition, this is not divided into odes, and thus does not present the outward appearance of a canon. In the Pentecostarion, one of the numerous Greek service-books, from which Dr. Neale translates it (p. 880), it is properly arranged, with the intervening "Catabasiæ," "Ectenæ," and the like.

of Damascene, is familiar to many from the poetical version of Dr. Neale :—

"'Tis the Day of Resurrection :
Earth ! tell it out abroad !
The Passover of gladness !
The Passover of God !
From Death to Life eternal,
From this world to the sky,
Our Christ hath brought us over,
With hymns of victory."

But it may give a truer idea of its real form to subjoin Dr. Neale's literal rendering of one or two of the odes composing it :—

ODE 3.—*The Hirmos.*

"Come, and let us drink the new drink, not produced by miracle from the barren rock, but the fountain of immortality, Christ having burst from the tomb, in Whom we are established."

Now are all things filled with light ; earth and heaven, and that which is under the earth. Now then let all creation keep festival for the Resurrection of Christ, in which it is established.

Yesterday, O Christ, I was buried together with Thee ; to-day with Thee arising I arise. Yesterday I was crucified together with Thee : glorify me, O Saviour, together with Thyself in Thy Kingdom.

ODE 4.—*Hirmos.*

"Upon thy divine watch-tower, Habaccuk, Prophet of God, stand with me and shew the Angel of Light continually proclaiming, To-day is salvation to the world, for Christ, as Almighty, hath arisen."

Christ appeared as a male, opened the Virgin's womb ; and, as mortal, He is named a Lamb. Spotless is our Pascha

called, as being without taste of blemish, and, as true God, He is named perfect.

As a yearling lamb, our blessed Crown, Christ, was of His own accord sacrificed as the expiatory Pascha for all; and again shone forth to us from the tomb, the beautiful Sun of Righteousness.

David, the Divine Father, leapt and danced before the mystic Ark; and the holy people of God, beholding the forthgiving of the symbols. Let us rejoice in God, for that Christ, as Almighty, hath arisen.

Of the other hymns of Damascene, those with which English readers have been made most familiar, are perhaps the *Idiomela*, or irregular verses, for All Saints, beginning in Dr. Neale's beautiful version :—

"Those eternal bowers
Man hath never trod,"

and the "*Stichera*[1] of the Last Kiss." These last are the solemn verses sung by the grave-side, in the funeral service of the Eastern Church, while the relatives and friends of the deceased advance and give a parting kiss to the corpse before it is laid in the earth; the priest doing so last of all. The opening lines, as rendered by the same translator, are as follows :—

"Take the last kiss, the last for ever!
Yet render thanks amid your gloom:
He, sever'd from his home and kindred,
Is passing onwards to the tomb.

[1] A *sticheron* is a verse, or short hymn, in measured prose, much the same as a *troparion* before explained; the special name given to the latter pointing out its relation to the model verse, or *hirmos*.

For earthly labours, earthly pleasures,
And carnal joys, he cares no more:
Where are his kinsfolk and acquaintance?
They stand upon another shore.
Let us say, around him pressed,
Grant him, Lord, eternal rest!"

There are eight *Idiomela* composed by Damascene in the Funeral Service, one for each tone.[1] In Lequien's edition only four of these are given, but the remainder will be found in the Euchologium.[2] As I am not aware that they have ever appeared in an English version, I will venture to give the following:—

FUNERAL HYMN.

I.

What pride of life abides untouch'd by sorrow?
What earthly glory fades not on the morrow?
Like fleeting shadows, or like dreams deceiving,
One moment ours, then Death's the all-receiving.
Then let Thy face upon our lost one shine;
Cheer him, sweet Saviour, with Thy love divine,
And give repose to this elect of Thine!

II.

Ah me! the agony of life departing:
How grieves the soul, on her long journey starting!

---

[1] The eight tones, or modes, referred to, answer to the Gregorian in the Western Church; four, called *authentic*, corresponding to the first, third, fifth, and seventh Gregorian; and the other four, called *plagal*, corresponding to the even numbers. A ninth is sometimes reckoned. See Neale's "Eastern Church," p. 1046.

[2] Ed. Venice (1862), p. 414.

To man she turns, but man may not deliver,
Nor angels save from crossing the dark river.
Then pray we, Brothers, heeding life's brief space,
For rest to him who now has run his race,
And for our own souls Jesu's boundless grace.

III.

Vain, vain is all, if not the grave surviving :
Nor fame nor riches aid us in our striving.
Companions false ! they flee at Death's arriving.
Therefore to Christ th' eternal let us pray
For rest to him who now has pass'd away,
In yonder realms of joy and endless day.

IV.

Where now the world, with all its fitful passion?
Where now its changing scene, its transient fashion?
Where now the hoarded gold, the silver gleaming,
The hum of slaves thro' lordly mansions streaming?
All dust and ashes, all a fleeting cloud—
Then to the King eternal cry aloud :
Vouchsafe, O Lord, to him who now has pass'd
Thine endless bliss, and rest with Thee at last.

V.

Methinks I hear the voice prophetic crying
I am but dust and ashes! and see lying
The fleshless tenants of the tomb : and sighing
"Who now is king?" I ask, "who warrior here?
Who saint, who sinner? all alike appear."—
Then from his toils Thy servant, Lord, release ;
And grant him, with the blest, eternal peace.

VI.

Of things unseen and seen, at Thy decreeing,
Beneath Thy moulding hand I took my being :
Earth gave me body, but the soul immortal
Came at Thy breathing through no earthly portal.
Ev'n so, O Lord, in tents of righteousness,
Among the living, this Thy servant bless.

VII.

Once in Thine image and Thy likeness moulded
Was man, the lord of all, in Eden folded;
Till by the Tempter, envious of his blessing,
Beguiled he ate, Thy first command transgressing.
Wherefore the doom went forth: *Return to dust,*
For dust thou art. And yet, O Lord, we trust
Thy word, that rest remaineth for the just.

VIII.

I mourn and weep, at thoughts of death repining,
When in the grave all cold I view reclining
That form, now formless, once by God created
In His own image, and with beauty mated.
Strange, passing strange, this fate of man mysterious!
Corruption's prey, and yoked to death imperious.
God wills it: we His written promise keep,
That *so He giveth His beloved sleep.*

One more specimen may suffice. It is a Prayer before the Holy Eucharist. As the entire hymn might be thought too prolix, I have given the first half, or rather more, together with the closing lines :—

A PRAYER.

With lips unclean, O Lord,
And with a heart defiled,
With tongue profaned and conscience stained
I come, Thy erring child.

O Christ! reject me not
For ways or works of shame;
But let me dare in trustful prayer
To call upon Thy name.

Yea, rather, teach Thou me
Both what to do and say;
For deep in sin as Magdalene
My soul has gone astray.

But she her Saviour sought ;
  And, finding, meekly dared
To bathe His feet with ointment sweet,
  The spikenard she prepared.

That off'ring of the heart
  Thou didst not then disdain ;
Then, O my Lord, to me accord
  Her part to act again :

In faith to clasp, to hold,
  To kiss, with banished fears,
To balm those feet with unguents sweet,
  The spikenard of my tears.

Yea, let those tears for me
  Become a healing stream :
'Tis I that crave the cleansing wave,
  'Tis Thou that canst redeem.

Not hid from Thee my faults,
  My failings in the fight ;
The scars received, the steps retrieved,
  Alike are in Thy sight.

Thou knowest my desire,
  My Maker and my God ;
The tearful sob, the heart's low throb,
  Are heard in Thine abode.

Then look on mine estate,
  And bid my sufferings cease ;
O God of all, to Thee I call,
  From sin vouchsafe release.

That so, in reverent awe,
  I may myself prepare
With heart made whole and contrite soul
  These hallowed rites to share.

Thy mysteries divine
Can heavenly life impart,
Yea, godlike make all those who take
In pure and honest heart.

"Who eateth of My flesh
And drinketh of My blood,
Abides in Me, and I will be
In him," the word hath stood.

My thoughts by this inspired
On fresher pinions soar;
Exult to gaze with rapt amaze
On grace's boundless store.

Like straw with fire, my soul
May flame, with love illumed:
The love that burns, to dew but turns;
The bush is not consumed.

Therefore with thankful heart
And spirit I adore,
And hymns of praise to Thee will raise,
My God, for evermore.[1]

Mention has been already made of the eight tones, or modes, used in the sacred music of the Eastern Church. From these is derived the title of one of the Service-books, the "Octoëchos," which contains the musical portions of the Sunday services. Before taking leave of St. John of Damascus as the great

[1] Migne's edition, vol. iii., p. 853. In the Euchologium it is attributed, I know not on what grounds, to Symeon the younger. The verses are entitled Anacreontics; and Billius, in his Latin version, has preserved this metre. But though some of the lines may, by a little ingenuity, be scanned as Anacreontics, it seems to me that they are in reality trochaic dimeters, scanned by accent, not quantity.

hymn-writer of that Church, we should add that to him is ascribed the composition of this book; or, at least, of the original germ or nucleus of it. Not merely the words, but the music as well, have been attributed to him; and some writers have even gone so far as to say, that he must be considered the author both of Eastern Church music, and of the system of notation used for it.[1] This is no doubt an exaggeration of his services; but the very existence of such a belief testifies to the high repute in which his merits as a hymn-writer were held.

[1] "Biographie Universelle des Musiciens," par F. J. Fétis (1862), tom. iii., p. 432. The writer, who was chapel-master to the King of the Belgians, considers Damascene as the reformer, rather than the originator, of Greek Church music. "Il n'est pas exact," he adds, "de dire, comme Villoteau, qu'il a inventé la musique ecclésiastique grecque, ni d'affirmer, comme Allacci, et comme Zarlino ("De Instit. Harmon.," 4me Partie, c. viii.), qu'il fut aussi l'inventeur de la notation de cette musique." Manuscripts of the "Octoëchos," some of them with ancient musical notation, are preserved in the Imperial Libraries of Paris and Vienna. A list of some of them is given in Fabricius, and in Haenel's "Catalogi Librorum" (1830).

CHAPTER XI.

COMMENTARIES ON HOLY SCRIPTURE.

FROM the importance of the subject of this chapter, it might seem to have deserved an earlier consideration. The space taken up by the works included under it—amounting together to nearly one-half of all published by Lequien[1]—is so great, that we may be thought to have postponed too long our notice of Damascene as a commentator on the Bible. The reason is simply that there is but little of his own in these expositions. In the first of the works in question, the "Loci Selecti," he only professes to be giving extracts from the commentary of St. Chrysostom. In the other two, the "Sacra Parallela," he does no more than group together passages of Scripture on consecutive topics, and add short illustrations of them from other writers. The nature of these works will be explained more fully presently: what has been said may account for the precedence given to other compositions of Damascene, at first

[1] Migne's ed., vol. ii., pp. 439–1588, and vol. iii., pp. 9–544. An abridgement only of the last of the three works, the "Parallela Rupefucaldina," is printed by Lequien, because he considers it to be substantially the same work as the preceding one. It bears its name of "Rupefucaldina" from the manuscript containing it having been given to the Jesuits' College at Clermont by Cardinal Rochefoucauld.

sight occupying a much less prominent place in his extant writings.

Before examining these commentaries in detail, it may be well to call attention to the mere fact of their existence, and their extent. The eighth century has sometimes been reckoned a part of the dark ages; and very extraordinary assertions have been made, and are still made, about the ignorance of Holy Scripture then prevailing. It becomes instructive, therefore, to observe how, nearly at the same time, John of Damascus in the Eastern Church, and our own Bede in the Western, were labouring at the task of Biblical exposition. At the end of his "Church History," Bede sets down a list of his works, and the great majority of these are commentaries on the several books of Holy Scripture. He was occupied in this task, as is well known, up to the very close of his life. The touching letter of his disciple Cuthbert shows him to us, at Whitsuntide in 734, dictating the last verse of his translation of St. John's Gospel, when his own departure was nigh at hand. And in such studies the best part of his life had been spent. "From the time that I was ordained priest," he writes, "till now, when I am fifty-eight years old, I have occupied myself with writing commentaries upon the sacred Scriptures, to suit my own needs and those of my brethren; gathered from the works of the venerable fathers, and either briefly given, or as a paraphrastical interpretation of the same."[1] It has been remarked that "of the one hundred and thirty-nine works from his pen, printed in the

[1] "Historia Ecclesiastica" (ed. Moberly), Introd., p. xiv.

Cologne edition of his writings, sixty-four consist entirely of biblical commentary, embracing illustrations of almost every portion of the inspired volume."[1]

Such was what one single scholar was doing in our own land in the early part of the eighth century. We have now to see how far St. John of Damascus was a fellow-labourer in the same field.

The first of the three works referred to at the beginning of this chapter, and which, for shortness, may be termed "Loci Selecti," consists of a selection of passages, chiefly from the Homilies of Chrysostom, appended as a running commentary to the text of St. Paul's Epistles. According to the exact title given by the author himself, "Selections taken from the Catholic interpretation of John Chrysostom," it would seem as if he had begun by drawing his expositions entirely from the writings of that father. And, in fact, on the Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, the commentary is in the main from his homilies. But on others—especially those to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians —it is not from Chrysostom but from Theodoret and Cyril of Alexandria, that the substance of the annotations is derived.[2] From the great brevity of the

[1] L. A. Buckingham: "The Bible in the Middle Ages" (1853), p. 29. A list of Beda's commentaries is given by Professor Stubbs in his article under that name in the "Dictionary of Christian Biography."

[2] This is pointed out by Lequien, who also observes that here are passages in the notes which appear to be written, if not by Damascene himself, at any rate by some one who lived after the rise of Nestorianism; terms peculiar to that heresy being used, as in the comment on Col. ii. 9.

comments on some passages, in the later Epistles more particularly, it would almost seem as if, in the original manuscript of Damascenus, they had been written in the margin of some codex, opposite the text; and had been afterwards arranged, by some later transcriber, in the order which we now possess. In its present form, it exhibits the entire text of St. Paul's Epistles, broken up into groups, sometimes of a few words only, sometimes of several verses together, according to the frequency of the comments following. These latter are printed after the detached portion of the text in each case.

As the commentary is professedly not that of Damascenus himself, and his chief or only task has been that of selecting from the writings of others, it would serve no purpose to give any extracts from it here. The work done, in this instance, was but the humbler work of a compiler. But attention has been called to it, from the very fact of its being work spent on such a subject and at such a time.

The next two treatises, "Sacra Parallela" (for we may properly class both under the title of the first), show a little more originality of design, but are still in the main only compilations. Like many other compilations, meant rather to be practically useful than to reflect credit on the author, these before us appear to have been so altered and added to, that it is difficult to discern the lines of the original workmanship. The general plan is that of a concordance, of subjects, not of words, arranged in alphabetical order. That is to say, the most striking passages in Holy Writ which refer to any particular topic—as,

for instance, the *eternity* of God, *wisdom*, *charity*, and what not—are grouped together, and followed, generally, though not always, by illustrative passages from other authors. There is a carefully-prepared index in the Greek, in which the subjects treated of may be found under the initial letter of the word denoting them ; and at the end of each alphabetical group comes a series of *parapompæ*, or cross-references, to facilitate the search. Thus, to take an example from the English names, if one wishes to find what is said in Holy Scripture about *arrogancy*, he is directed to turn to the word *pride*; for *men-pleasers*, he will have to turn to *flatterers*, and the like.

There is, of course, nothing very original in all this, and nothing that may be thought of much interest or importance to us now; still, it is not undeserving of mention in its place, as showing the laborious and systematic way in which the sacred Scriptures were studied. The original idea of Damascenus, as it would appear from his preface, was not that of an *alphabetical* concordance of subjects, but of an arrangement in three books ; of which the first was to treat of God and the Holy Trinity, the second of human affairs, and the third of virtues and vices. Moreover, the passages to be selected as illustrative, were meant by him to be taken entirely from the fathers of the Church. Whether this original plan was modified by the author himself in later years, or whether it was altered by others, it would now be very difficult to decide. At any rate, in the form in which we now have it, the alphabetical arrangement

has entirely effaced the traces of division into books ; while in a kind of postscript to the preface (p. 1044), it is stated that extracts from Philo and Josephus will be found among the illustrations. Indeed, in the long list of authors quoted, we may find the names of most of the classical writers of Greece. The circumstance of the author's first design having been so greatly changed, may be taken as a testimony to the practical usefulness of the work. Its fate has simply been that of any manual, or work of reference, which has passed through many editions.

For the sake of completeness, a few extracts are here given as an illustration of the mode of treatment employed. It would be superfluous to pursue the subject to any length, because, as the passages cited are taken from other authors, they do not affect our estimate of Damascene, otherwise than as they may make us think more or less highly of his skill and judgment in the selection. A few subjects have been taken, almost at random, and a portion only of the parallel passages given.

On the Saints of God.

Ps. xciv., 12.[1]—*Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in Thy law.*

[1] The passages from Scripture are taken in regular order in the "Sacra Parallela." The earliest quoted under this head is Levit. xxvi. 2, which I have passed over, owing to the rendering of the English version making it inappropriate :—*Ye shall reverence my sanctuary* (instead of *my saints*). This is a difficulty that often arises. Thus in Ps. lxviii. 35, *holy places* is again our rendering for the *saints* of the Septuagint and Vulgate. In Jerem. xxxi. 12, for *the soul of the saints shall*

St. Matth. v., 11.—*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, &c.*

Heb. xi., 13.—*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, &c.*

(And thirty-three other passages from Scripture).

St. Gregory Nazianzen.—"This, I say, is the best of bargains, to purchase the kingdom of heaven for a few drops of blood, and in return for temporal advantages to receive an eternity of glory."

St. Chrysostom.—"The wonder-workers of Christ are not men who run on a slender cord, or who throw somersaults over naked swords, avoiding wounds by their dexterity. What they run along with unfaltering step, is not a rope, but the narrow and precipitous pathway of righteousness. The points of tyrants' swords they blunt by their own eagerness for receiving wounds. They count it not a mark of skill to avoid suffering, but study how to conquer in suffering."

On a Good King.

Numb. xxiv., 7.—*His kingdom shall be exalted.*

Prov. xiv., 28.—*In the multitude of people is the king's honour.*

(And twenty-five other passages.

St. Gregory Nazianzen.—"Kings, reverence your purple. For the Word of God will give laws even to the law-givers. Recognise what has been entrusted

be a fruitful vine, our version has *their soul shall be as a watered garden.* The whole string of texts could not be quoted, owing to this circumstance, without frequent explanations.

to you, and what is the great mystery you betoken. The whole world is put into your hands, ruled over by a little diadem and a few rags. What is above, is God's alone; what is beneath, is yours also. Become gods, then, if I may utter a bold expression, to those beneath you. *The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord*: so it is written, and so we believe. Even there let your sovereignty lie; not in gold, or in armed hosts. And ye courtiers also, who are about the palace and the throne, be not over-elated with your powers, nor think of mortal things as if they were immortal."

On Old Men, and the Honour Due to Them.

Levit. xix., 32.—*Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.*[1]

Prov. xx., 29.—*The beauty of old men is the gray head.*

Eccles. xxv., 6.—*Much experience is the crown of old men, and the fear of God is their glory.*

(And ten other passages.)

St. Basil.—"Maturity of judgment has more to do than grayness of hair in forming an old man."

Philo.—"A man is seen to be truly old, not by his length of years, but by a praiseworthy and perfect life. If any have spent a long period in this bodily life, without goodness, they should rather be called aged children, never having been trained in learning fit for the hoary head. Old age is a haven with no

[1] It may be remembered that this was the verse Samuel Rogers used to admire so much, for the beauty of its rhythm.

tossing waves. As the body grows weak, the passions furl their sails."

On Keeping Watch Over the Tongue.

Job xxvii., 4.—*My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.*

St. James iii., 2.—*If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*

(And twenty other passages.)

St. Gregory Nazianzen.—"Ye know not what a gift from God is silence. Yet speak, if thou hast aught better than silence. But be content to hold thy peace, where that is better than words."

Nilus.—"Refrain, I beseech thee, thy unbridled tongue. For a slip of the tongue is more serious than a slip of the foot."

On the Church, and House of God.

Ps. xxvi., 8.—*Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.*

Baruch iii., 24.—*How great is the house of God! and how large is the place of His possession! Great, and hath none end; high, and immeasurable.*

(And twenty-five other passages.)

St. Chrysostom.—"Like harbours at sea, God established His churches in cities; that we might flee to them from the tossing of life's commotions, and find still water. If we put in there for refuge, we need fear no surging of waves, no attack of pirates,

no violence of winds, no monsters of the deep. For the harbour is one safe sheltered from all these. The Church is the haven of souls."

It would take a far abler translation than mine to do justice to the thoughts of a Nazianzen or a Chrysostom ; but even from such specimens as these the reader may perhaps conclude, that the Bible commentary prepared by John of Damascus was of a kind he would at times be glad to get in exchange for more modern annotations.

CHAPTER XII.

ON NATURAL SCIENCE.

THE debt which Europe owes to Arabia for the transmission of ancient learning and science has been often stated, and may be cheerfully owned. Under the splendid rule of the Caliphs of Bagdad, from the middle of the eighth century, the arts and sciences flourished on the banks of the Tigris, in a way that none could have expected from the previous history of Mahomet's successors. At the court of the Abassides, says Hallam,[1] "learning, which the first Moslem had despised as unwarlike, or rejected as profane, was held in honour. The Khalif Almamùn, especially, was distinguished for his patronage of letters; the philosophical writings of Greece were eagerly sought and translated; the stars were numbered, the course of the planets was measured; the Arabians improved upon the science they borrowed, and returned it with abundant interest to Europe in the communication of numeral figures and the intellectual language of algebra." The merit of transmitting and, as time went on, of improving upon the sciences they transmitted, cannot, under any circumstances, be denied them. But there is no reason to allow them, as is sometimes done, the higher merit

[1] "Middle Ages," c. vi.

of originality; of being discoverers as well as preservers. The ever-present reminder of our debt in the Arabic numerals, and the occurrence of Arabic terms in chemistry and astronomy, may blind us to the fact that the Saracens gave us little but what they had themselves received. Even the science of algebra, referred to by Hallam, whose Arabic name seems to bespeak for it a purely Arabic origin, was not invented by them; they simply extended and improved the system of Diophantus.[1] It is the more necessary to be clear on this point, since the way of speaking found in some authors might cause it to be imagined that not only the physical science, but the philosophy, of modern Europe had its source in the Arabian peninsula. Warton, for instance, in commenting on the works read by Chaucer's Doctour of Phisicke :—

> Well knew he the old Esculapius,
> And Dioscorides, and eke Rufus,
> Old Hippocrates, Haly, and Galen,
> Serapion, Rasis, and Avicen,
> Averrois, Damascene, Constantine,
> Bernard, and Gattisden, and Gilbertin,

speaks of "the Aristotelian *or Arabian* philosophy" as "continuing to be communicated from Spain and

[1] The writer whom the Arabians regard as the inventor of their system of Algebra, Mahommed Ben Musa, or Moses, lived about the middle of the ninth century, some five hundred years after the work of Diophantus appeared. The improvements they made in the science do not appear to have been great.—See the article on "Algebra" in the *Encyclop. Britannica* (1865), i. p. 512.

Africa to the rest of Europe chiefly by means of the Jews about the tenth and eleventh centuries;"[1] and of astronomy as "a science which the Arabians engrafted upon medicine." Bailly has given a more just estimate of their claims to our respect, as being the safe-keepers and continuers of a learning that would have been lost but for them; while yet, on the other hand, their existence is scarcely marked by a single memorable discovery.[2] In giving an abstract of what one of the authors named above by Chaucer, our own 'Damascene,' has left on scientific subjects, it will be our aim to show the part taken by Syrian Christians in the transmission of ancient lore. If he studied in his youth the Diophantine arithmetic, which was the germ of our modern algebra; if he epitomized the Organum of Aristotle, and made himself acquainted with the astronomical system of Ptolemy,—and that before the seat of Mussulman empire was removed to Bagdad—we may see in him one evident link at least, by which the knowledge of ancient Greece was conveyed to the new conquerors.

The part played by Syria in the history of the world has not been conspicuous, either in arms or

[1] "Hist. of English Poetry," sect. xvii.

[2] "Les Arabes ne sont recommandables que pour avoir été l'entrepôt des sciences, pour avoir conservé le feu sacré, qui se seroit éteint sans eux. Mais s'ils nous ont transmis les sciences, ils nous les ont fait passer à peu près telles qu'ils les avoient reçues; à peine une découverte mémorable marque-t-elle leur existence." "Hist. de l'Astronomie Moderne" (1785), t. i., p. 221.

secular literature. But it has not been on that account unimportant. It was in Syria that Greek philosophy found a home, after it had been driven from Alexandria. The Aristotelian philosophy, in particular, which was looked on with suspicion and dislike by the earlier fathers of the Church, and which John of Damascus himself inveighs against in one of his writings, when used as a pillar of Nestorianism,[1] became domiciled there, and was in the end employed by Damascenus in the service of the orthodox faith. To Syrian Christians belongs the credit of having taught their Arabian conquerors what the latter in turn taught Western Europe. The versions of Aristotle were not made by Arabic scholars directly from the Greek, but by Syrian interpreters, first into Syriac, and then (often from that same Syriac version) into Arabic.[2] The chief physicians, and in that sense teachers of science, at the court of Bagdad, appear to have been Nestorians of Syria; and as the first Arabic translation of Aristotle was not made till the reign of Almamùn (813-833), it becomes a matter of some interest to

[1] "Contra Jacobitas," Migne's ed., tom. i., col. 1441. He there bitterly speaks of Aristotle as a "thirteenth apostle" in the estimation of the heretics.

[2] This is distinctly stated by Renan in his essay "De Philosophia Peripatetica apud Syros," 1852, p. 55; and to the same effect Schmölders, "Essai sur les écoles philosophiques chez les Arabes," 1842, p. 95, and Ueberweg, "Hist. of Philosophy" (tr. by Norris and Porter), 1875, i., p. 410. "The acquaintance of the Mohammedan Arabs," says the last-mentioned author, "with the writings of Aristotle was brought about through the agency of Syrian Christians."

observe what scientific knowledge was possessed by John of Damascus nearly a century before.

What Damascenus has written on the subject is mainly to be found in the second book of his "De Fide Orthodoxa." After a few general remarks, in the fifth chapter, about the visible creation, he proceeds to discuss the meaning of *Heaven*. This he defines to be that which encompasses all things, both visible and invisible. Such expressions, found in Scripture, as *heaven of heavens* and *third heaven* may be explained, without laying stress on the Hebrew way of using a plural for a singular, as denoting (1) the air, (2) the firmament, and (3) the starless region beyond. It is to the second, or starry firmament, that the term *heaven* most properly belongs; and various opinions as to its nature, shape, and motion are briefly referred to. Some have held, with regard to the first of these points, that it must be a *quintum corpus*, or fifth variety of matter, seeing that it has properties distinct from those of any of the four known. This refers, of course, to the doctrine of the later peripatetic school, deduced from Aristotle's treatise "De Cælo."[1] The shape of it is thought by some to be spherical, and its motion circular, while others hold it to be of a hemispherical form. Here

[1] Lib. i., c. ii. The arguments on this topic are summed up by Franciscus Coventriensis, at p. 29 of his "De Mundo Peripatetico," Antwerp, 1652. The work is, I believe, very little known, and certainly does not appear to possess any scientific merit. But the frequent allusions contained in it to English persons and events might possibly give it a value for enquirers with other objects.

again the author puts in the first place the opinion of Aristotle,[1] and after it the one held, besides others, by Chrysostom. The arguments, if such they can be called, which made St. Chrysostom contend for the hemispherical form of heaven, were nothing but analogies drawn from certain passages of Scripture. Thus, in Hebrews viii. 2, Christ, who is *set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*, is a minister of the *true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man*. Hence, as the heaven is compared to the tabernacle of old, it must resemble it in form; that is, it must be rather of the figure of a tent or dome than of a sphere. Others on the same side would quote Isaiah xl. 22, where it is said of God that he *stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.* It can hardly be denied that John of Damascus, in his treatment of this subject, shows to advantage beside his namesake Chrysostom. In the centre of this hollow sphere, the centre of the universe, is the earth. For earth, as being the heaviest of the elements, must needs subside to the lowest region; and lowest, in this case, means central, since any divergence from the centre of a sphere would be an approach to the circumference, and in that respect

1 "De Cælo," Lib. ii., c. iv. Aristotle there makes it *necessary* for the heaven to be spherical, for reasons like those by which the orbit of the planets was held to be necessarily circular, because the circle was the only perfect figure; an opinion, or rather prejudice, which it cost Kepler a hard struggle to divest himself of, and which he called "a great thief of his time."

would be a rising.[1] As against the theory of Plato in the "Timæus," that the heavenly bodies are *animated*, or have a soul in-dwelling, he affirms that they are devoid of soul and sense. Such passages of Scripture as might appear to imply the contrary, such as the Psalmist's *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad*, must be regarded as instances of a kind of personification, often found in figurative language. So in another psalm we may read: *The sea saw it and fled; Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.*

Light, which is identical with fire, was called into being by the Creator on the first day. Darkness is not an essential property of matter, but an accident, being nothing else than the absence of light. The moon and the stars were ordained to give light by night; not that they are absent from the sky by day, but the sun by its superior brilliancy then makes them pale away and disappear. They are not lights in themselves, but light-holders. Conspicuous among these luminaries are the seven planets, called *planets*, or erratic stars, because they move in an opposite direction to the general motion of the heavens. Their names in order of distance from the earth are, the

[1] The peripatetics illustrated this by supposing the case of a well, or shaft, bored diametrically through the earth. If a stone was dropped down, they maintained that it must remain in equilibrium at the centre. See "Johannis Velcurionis Commentarii" (Lugd. 1558), p. 159. Erasmus also includes this *problema* among his Colloquies, but more prudently leaves it as an exercise for the scholar, to settle what the stone under such circumstances would do.

Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. These heavenly bodies were set by God in the firmament of heaven, to be *for signs and for seasons, and for days and years.* It is to the sun, accordingly, that we owe the alternations of the four seasons. It was in the first of these, the spring, that the world was made; a yearly reminder of which we have in the reappearance of plants and flowers in spring. Its duration is from March 21st[1] to June 24th. The summer quarter extends from June 24th to September 25th, the autumn from this latter date to December 25th, and so on. Each quarter has its special effect upon the temperament; spring tending to increase the sanguineous humour, summer the choleric, autumn the melancholy or atrabilious, and winter the phlegmatic.[2] It may have been owing to passages such as this, or the fragment *Quid est homo*, to be afterwards noticed, that John of Damascus came to be regarded as a proper writer for a "Doctour of Phisicke," like Chaucer's, to study. For the poet's physician

> "was grounded in astronomie:
> He kept his pacients a full gret dele
> In houris by his magike naturell."

And for many ages afterwards the healing art was

[1] An obvious correction of the Greek text as it here appears in Migne's edition is to alter *ἀπὸ Μαρτίου καὶ μέχρις κ.τ.λ.*, to *ἀπὸ Μαρτίου κά, i.e., from March 21st.*

[2] The same arrangement of influences is given in Velcurio, before quoted, p. 144.

tinctured with astrology. At the same time, while thus noting the influence of the seasons, real or imaginary, on the bodily temperament, Damascenus enters a strong protest against attributing to the stars any influence on the human will or actions. His words on this subject deserve quoting. "The Gentiles say that all our affairs are ordered by the rising and setting and conjunction of these stars, and of the sun and moon. For such is the subject that astrology treats of. But we assert, that while signs are given by them of rain and fair weather, of cold and heat, of moisture and drought, of winds, and the like, yet of our own actions no signs at all are given. For, since we were formed by our Creator with freedom of will, we are thus masters of our own actions. Now, if it is by the leading of the stars that we do all that we do, then are our actions not voluntary. But what is not voluntary is neither virtue nor vice. And if we are possessed of neither virtue nor vice, we are deserving of neither praise nor punishment, so that God also will be found unjust, in giving blessings to one and afflictions to another. Nay, it will follow that God provides neither guidance nor forethought for his creatures, if all are led and carried along involuntarily. . . . . Wherefore we affirm that the stars are not the essential causes of anything that comes to pass, either of the birth of what comes into being, or the decay of that which decays; but are rather signs of showers of rain, and changes of the atmosphere. . . . . Our habits are among the things in our own control, for they are governed by reason, and follow the turn we give

them."[1] When we recollect how strong a tendency there was among the followers of Mahomet to astrological superstition,[2] we shall appreciate more fully the courage and wisdom of these words of Damascenus.

The signs of the zodiac are set down in order, with the day of the year in which the sun enters each; and after some remarks, in a moralising rather than in a scientific vein, on the borrowed light of the moon, the author proceeds to state the causes of an eclipse. An eclipse of the sun is due to the intervention of the moon between it and the earth; and though the sun be much the larger body of the two, yet we ought not to wonder that its disc can be hidden from us by the moon, when we reflect how small an object—a little cloud, a hillock, a house-wall—can conceal it from our sight. An eclipse of the moon takes place only when it is fifteen days old, or at full, and is due to the shadow of the earth falling upon it, when that body is between it and the sun.

The lengths of the solar and lunar years are next compared. Mixed up with this matter of simple computation is a remark—reminding us how far removed we are from modern mathematics in the

[1] Migne's ed. i., p. 893.

[2] "Ce que les Arabes adoptèrent avec plus d'ardeur ce fut l'astrologie judiciaire. Cette erreur est naturalisée dans l'Asie méridionale, où un climat brûlant allume l'imagination, où les désirs excités demandent des espérances, et où l'homme plus foible qu'ailleurs, croit plus aisément ce qu'il souhaite." Bailly, *ubi. sup.* p. 223

treatise now before us—that we must conclude that the moon was created at the full, being then in its perfect and befitting state.' Hence it would have got a start of eleven days over the sun, beginning in the condition of fifteen days old, whereas the sun was created on the fourth day. Four from fifteen leave eleven; and thus it arises that the lunar year is eleven days shorter than the solar. It would not be giving a just representation of what Damascenus has written on these subjects, to pass over unnoticed such a specimen of childish reasoning; but it is only fair to observe, on the other hand, that the thought does not appear to be his own, but taken from a writer mentioned by Lequien, Severianus Gabalitanus.

In describing the ecliptic circle, he assigns three *decani*, or thirty degrees, to each sign of the zodiac, making 360° for the entire circumference. In what follows, on the *houses* of the planets, he seems rather to verge on astrology;[1] but a short enumeration is all that he gives on this head. Aries and Scorpio are the *house* of Mars; Taurus and Libra of Venus, and so on.

Next in order he discusses briefly the nature of air and wind. Air is a subtle element, heavier than fire, but lighter than earth or water, in itself colourless and non-luminous, but serving as a vehicle to three of our

[1] "In so far as the planets were concerned, it was of especial importance [for calculating nativities] to note through what sign of the zodiac they happened to be passing, since each planet had a peculiar sign, called the *domus* or house of the planet, during its sojourn in which it possessed superior power." Prof. Ramsay's art. on "Astrologia" in Smith's "Dict. of Antiquities."

senses, sight, hearing, and smell. Wind is an agitation, or current of air; and according to the quarter from which it sets, we give it in each case a special name. The names of the winds, twelve in all, are then set down. This is followed by an account of water, and the chief collections of water on the globe. By *ocean*—the "refluent ocean stream" of Milton—is meant "a kind of river encircling the whole earth, about which Holy Scripture seems to speak, in the words *a river went out of Eden*, having sweet and drinkable water. This supplies water to the various seas. But from the water remaining a long time in them without change, it becomes brackish; the more rarefied part being constantly drawn off by the sun and by waterspouts. It is from this that clouds are formed and rain ensues, the water becoming sweet by percolation through the air." The four rivers of Paradise he identifies with the Ganges, the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates. The different seas, or parts of seas, then known, are next named in order, beginning with the Ægæan. Lastly, the measurements of the three continents are given. The length[1] of Europe, as one coasts along from the mouth of the Tanais (Don) to the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar), is 609,709 stades; that of Africa, from Tingis (Tangier) to the Canobic mouth of the Nile, is 209,252 stades; and that of Asia, from Canobus to the Don, is 4,111 stades. It is plain that some error has here crept into the text, possibly by a misinterpretation of the

[1] Taking *length* in its geographical sense of longitude, or distance east and west.

Greek numerical letters;[1] for, taking the usual measurement of 202 yards for a stade, we should thus arrive at the prodigious result of nearly 70,000 miles, as the length of the southern coast-line of Europe. It will be observed that the shores of the Mediterranean, and of the land-locked seas connected with it, are alone comprised in this survey.

In what follows, on earth, paradise, and the tree of knowledge, to the twelfth chapter, which treats of man, there is little but inferences or reflections from Scripture; and hence nothing further need be said on these subjects here.

Besides the above, there are extant a few short fragments in which Damascenus treats of matters more or less connected with natural history; though his mode of treatment will hardly be thought scientific. The first two of these are on dragons and ghouls.[2] In these he appears as the opponent of popular superstitions. Dragons, he tells us, were vulgarly supposed to be huge snakes capable of assuming human form, of entering houses under that disguise, and doing harm of various kinds to the inmates. Moreover, they were especially a mark for thunderbolts, being

[1] I do not understand the principle on which the first of these letters (*stau*, or the *digamma*) is made by the Latin translator to stand for 600,000. According to Herodianus, *De Numeris*, a different symbol would be used. Neither do the three amounts above given make up the total which follows of 1,309,072 stades for all the coast line round the Mediterranean and up to the Sea of Azov. If we read 69,709, 29,252, and 4,111 stades respectively, we should be nearer the mark; though these would not give the total, reduced on the same principle, of 139,072.

[2] Migne's ed., vol. i., p. 1599.

sometimes caught up into the air and destroyed by lightning. The ghouls, or evil fairies, in like manner, called *Stryngæ* or *Geludes*, were believed by the ignorant to appear under the form of women, to be able to pass through closed doors, and to delight in strangling infants, or even devouring their inside.[1]

The line of argument taken in order to refute these strange notions is a peculiar one. Damascenus does not deny the existence of dragons, but maintains that they are nothing but serpents, of greater size than ordinary. He quotes the story of Dion Cassius, about the huge serpent killed by Regulus and his army when crossing the Bagradas, the skin of which was afterwards sent to Rome, and when measured proved to be 120 feet long.[2] There are also other strange kinds of serpents; some with eyes glittering like gold,[3] others with horns, with beards, and the like. As to their being a special mark for the vengeance of the thunderbolt, the idea is ridiculous. Thunder is caused by the bursting of a watery cloud, swollen with moisture, when driven along by the wind. The lightning strikes not dragons only, but all objects, without discrimination, that come in its way. Whether it be a tree, or a house, or a man, or

[1] From this I took the name of Ghouls, otherwise not very appropriate, to denote these imaginary beings. They seem to answer partly to the *Empusæ* or *Lamiæ* of the Greeks.

[2] Pliny, "Hist. Nat." viii. 12., tells the same story, adding that the skin was in existence down to the time of the Numantine war.

[3] Perhaps referring to the fabulous Basilisk; on which see Sir Thomas Browne's "Pseudodoxia Epidemica" (1672), p. 131.

any other animal, in every case the blow falls alike. The tone of this answer will remind us of that given by the Spartan survivor of Sphacteria, who, when an Athenian was tauntingly supposing that all the brave men on the island must have been killed, and none but the sorry remnant left to surrender, replied that it would be a wise arrow that could select the brave and not the cowardly for its mark. Damascenus proceeds to add a few remarks on the cause why the flash precedes the sound. Both originate simultaneously; but whereas the one, previously latent, is then instantly visible, the other produces no effect "until it has come down from its height." If the reason given be not clear, he adds a natural illustration. Let a man stand on a distant eminence and give a signal by striking with his stick. You see the movement of his arm, as he strikes the blow, some little space before the sound of it reaches you. If men would only study the Bible, they would not be misled by these childish fancies. Ignorance is a very misleading thing; and we suffer the greatest loss by not obeying our Lord's precept to search the Scriptures. As it is, all are full of excuses for neglecting the duty. The soldier says he has no need of reading, being a man of war; the husbandman pleads the necessity of attending to his farm: and so we all fall short.

The simple answer to the monstrous fables about the *Stryngæ*, or female forms that can pass through closed doors on their malevolent errands, is that Christ alone claimed and exercised this power, when He came to the disciples after His resurrection; and to aver that any ghoul or fairy can do the same thing

would be blasphemously to assign to them the same power as to Christ.

The reader may be disposed to think that in thus arguing, with reasons of whatever soundness, against the popular superstitions of his country, John of Damascus appears in a character somewhat at variance with that under which we have viewed him elsewhere, as the defender of image-worship. But, as Neander points out, there is no real inconsistency. "We see no good reason," he says, "why a defender of image-worship might not at the same time set himself to oppose that species of superstition. His conduct, in both cases alike, proceeded from religious motives. Image-worship . . . appears to him a practice altogether correspondent with the spirit of Christianity, and conformable to reason; but these stories he regarded as alike repugnant to Christian truth and reason. He ascribes the spread of the latter superstition among the people to the fact that they were kept in such total ignorance of the Scriptures. He insists that laymen of all classes, even soldiers and peasants, ought to read the sacred word." "This biblical tendency," he adds, "might seem to collide with the traditional one of a zealous image-worshipper; but neither are these contrarieties of such a nature that they might not exist together in the same individual."

One other fragment may be noticed.[1] It appears to have formed part of a letter, and in its present form is headed *Quid est homo? What is man?* It occupies but a single column, and breaks off in the

[1] Migne's ed., vol. ii., p. 243.

middle of a sentence. The definition given of man is that he is "a rational animal, liable to death, and capable of intelligence and knowledge." His bodily nature consists of four elements: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.[1] The seats of these humours are then described, and the effects observed from the preponderance of one or other of them. Traces of these opinions, as we are aware, survive in our own language. When we speak of a man as sanguine, choleric, melancholy, or phlegmatic, we are of course embodying the old ideas expressed by those words; just as, when we describe a person as humorous, or humoursome, or of a good or bad *temper* (that is, blending or combination of these *humours*), we are unconsciously employing terms of ancient medical science. An account of the noblest part of man's body, the head, is then begun. But the text is in such a mutilated condition that it is not easy to extract much meaning

[1] In the "De Fide Orthodoxa," ii. 12, the same distribution is made, with an additional comparison of them to the four cosmical elements. The black bile answers to earth, as being dry and cold; the phlegm to water, which is cold and moist; the blood to air, which is warm and moist; and the yellow bile to fire, which is hot and dry. The four seasons, it will be remembered, were also made analogous to them, as also the four periods of human life. Besides Chaucer's "Doctour of Phisike," who

> "Knew the cause of every maladie,
> Were it of cold, or hote, or moiste, or drie,
> And wher engendred, and of what humour,"

Burton may be cited as illustrating this subject:—"Anatomy of Melancholy" (ed. 1861), p. 93.

from it. The description is not, apparently, taken from Aristotle's *Historia Animalium;* for while in that work the skull of the male is said to have three sutures, and of the female one, cases being also known in which no suture at all was perceptible, here the author makes five to be the regular number, and a skull with one suture to be something extraordinary. He assigns also three membranes as coverings to the brain, instead of the two, the *dura mater* and *pia mater*, usually given. The brain is lastly, in his esteem, the "abode of life itself, and the depth profound of thoughts."

It is obvious, from this short analysis of what Damascenus has left on subjects connected with physical science, that it would be out of place to expect from him anything of the nature of true scientific enquiry. In this, as in other and more important sections of his writings, he does not profess to be a discoverer, but only a collector and preserver of the knowledge gained by others. He performs individually, as has been remarked, somewhat of the same office that his native country has done on a wider scale—he has been a transmitter. And hence it is of the less importance to ascertain the authors from whom he gathered his information. There are a few indications which seem to show that he may have met with Aristotle's treatise *De cælo.* He may also have seen some portions of the *Megale Syntaxis* of Ptolemy, better known afterwards under its Arabic title of *Almagest.* But he may also have had no more original authorities than Nemesius and Basil. The *Heptaemeron* of the latter he undoubtedly had

seen. Still, the claim put forth on his behalf does not appear affected by this. There is still reason to maintain that it was through him, and other Syrian Christians like him, that the chain of ancient learning continued unbroken. What Edessa was, as a link between Alexandria and Bagdad, such was John of Damascus between the Greek philosophers and the Saracen conquerors.[1]

[1] As a slight evidence, in passing, of the tendency to assign to the Arabians more credit than is their due, it may be observed that John of Damascus himself is described, by an able editor of the *Canterbury Tales*, as "an Arabian physician. . . . . probably of the ninth century." See the Clarendon Press edition of the "Prologue," &c., 1877, p. 135. While noting this, as significant of what I stated above, I must not refrain from adding my small tribute to the great merit of Dr. Morris's editorial work.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOUBTFUL WRITINGS.

(I.) *Barlaam and Joasaph;* (II.) *Panegyric on St. Barbara.*

In considering the works of doubtful genuineness ascribed to St. John of Damascus, the first place must be given to the Christian romance, if such we may call it, of "Barlaam and Joasaph." This precedence is due, not merely to its length,[1] but to the wide popularity it once enjoyed. A glance at the catalogues of manuscripts of Damascenus, whether at Vienna or elsewhere, will show how frequently it was copied. The same testimony is borne by early printed editions. The presses of Antwerp, Munich, and Cologne multiplied it in abundance to the end of the seventeenth century. In our own country an abridged version of it was issued as a chap-book by the stationers on London Bridge.[2] An epitome of it, in a Latin dress, appeared in the "Speculum Historiale" of Vincent of Beauvais, and also in the

[1] It occupies pp. 857–1250 of vol. iii. of Migne's edition. Lequien did not include it, his design being to add a third volume to his edition, in which such pieces might appear.

[2] Such an edition appeared in 1711, under the title of "Saint Josaphat: the History of the Five Wise Philosophers," 12mo. The introduction is signed by N. Herick, who commends it as profitable reading for his countrymen.

Golden Legend. The question of its genuineness [1] would be too long and difficult to enter upon here. It may suffice to say that, on the one hand, the frequent citations from Gregory of Nazianzus and other confessedly favourite authorities, as well as the occurrence of passages verbally coinciding with parts of the "De Orthodoxa Fide," no less than the prolix discussions on the personality of God and the worship of the Holy Images, offer a strong presumption in favour of John of Damascus as the author. On the other hand, the statement (p. 1028) as to the procession of the Holy Ghost *from the Son* as well as from the Father, would be at variance with the acknowledged teaching of a writer of the Eastern Church. It might no doubt be easily maintained that the words are an interpolation; and perhaps more convincing reasons, to some minds, would be drawn from the general style of the work. From the title of it no certain conclusion can be derived, owing to the varying forms under which it appears. In one manuscript [2] it is given as "A profitable history of Barlaam and Josaphat, from the interior region of Æthiopia, composed by our holy father and poet,

[1] When Boissonade published the Greek text for the first time in vol. iv. of his "Anecdota Græca" (Paris, 1832), he tantalized the reader by saying that he had meant to discuss this question fully, as also that of the occurrence of Syriac names in a story of which the scene is India or Æthiopia; but postponed his plan in deference to an expected edition by Schmidt and Kopitar. I cannot learn that this latter has ever appeared.

[2] Quoted by Leo Allatius in his "Prolegomena" (Migne's ed., vol. i., p. 155). Leo Allatius concludes, on the whole, in favour both of the genuineness and authenticity of the work.

John of Damascus." In another it is described as drawn up in the monastery of St. Saba by the same compiler, from the report of reverend men who had brought the narrative from Æthiopia. But in others, again, the author or compiler is more vaguely termed "John the monk," and the like. Nor is the question of authenticity less difficult to decide. The scene of the events related is not easy to verify—"the interior region of the Æthiopians, called India." In the beginning of the work itself the region is thus defined:—"What is called the country of the Indians, a great and populous country, lies at a distance from Egypt, being washed towards that quarter by navigable seas and the main. On the side of the mainland it approaches the confines of Persia."

The confusion of Æthiopians with Indians may perhaps be explained. In the earliest writers we find the terms used more or less promiscuously. Even Alexander the Great, we are told, expected to discover the source of the Nile in India.[1] If we take the expression "approaching the confines of Persia" to mean no more than that the district lay towards the east coast of Africa, we may perhaps feel our way to some conjecture as to the locality. For the monk Barlaam, who is one of the chief personages in the story, is described as coming from a desert place in the land of Senaar. This is assumed by Boissonade to be the Shinar or Babylonia of

[1] See the article "India" in Smith's "Dictionary of Geography," and also Neander's "Church History" (Bohn's ed.), vol. i., p. 113. The error perpetuated in our name "West Indies" will occur to the reader.

Genesis x. 10. But there seems no reason why it should not be the modern Senaar, between the Blue River and the true stream of the Nile. As the Memnones were placed not far off, an additional reason might thus be given for the blending of India and Æthiopia as the scene of the events. If the scene were thus correctly laid on the confines of Abyssinia, a somewhat curious analogy would be presented to a modern story, not wholly unlike the one now before us—Dr. Johnson's "Rasselas, or the Prince of Abyssinia." It is said that to this day the Abyssinians call themselves *Itiopjawan*, or Æthiopians, and their language is of Semitic origin.[1] This last circumstance may help to explain the fact that the names in "Barlaam and Joasaph" are Hebrew or Syriac. Besides those of the two principal characters, we have that of King Abenner, the father of Joasaph, Barachias, named as his successor, Nachor the astrologer, Theudas the magician, and the like. On the whole, observing also that the names of SS. Barlaam and Joasaph, or Josaphat, are found in the Roman martyrology, as well as in the Greek *Menæa*, it might not be unreasonable for us to conclude that some such account of the spread of Christianity in Abyssinia, or its confines, in the days when the Thebais was peopled with hermits, had reached the ears of John of Damascus, and that he enlarged it by the addition of the long discourses between the young prince and the monk. There may be thus the same basis of historical truth in it that there is in the

[1] See the article "Æthiopia" in Smith's "Dictionary of Geography."

"Cyropædia" of Xenophon or the "Utopia" of Sir Thomas More. But it is time that we enabled the reader to judge of the narrative for himself.

The king, then, of this shadowy land of interior Æthiopia was named Abenner. He lived at a time when the darkness of idolatry had been in part dispelled, through the preaching of St. Thomas and his successors, and when Egypt, in particular, abounded with holy recluses. But, though gifted with every bodily endowment, brave and victorious in war, Abenner had no true greatness of spirit, but delighted in worldly pleasures, and hated and persecuted the religion of Christ. Many of his subjects were compelled to abjure the faith; others were tortured, or fled to the surrounding deserts. Among those who had so withdrawn to the society of the hermits was a "chief satrap," by whom the king set great store. Galled by such a defection, Abenner had a close search made after him; and when the satrap was at length captured and brought to his presence, he indignantly demanded of him how he could think of exchanging his former honours and dignity for the mean and sordid apparel of the monk. "My liege," replied the other, "if you wish to debate the matter with me, bid your enemies depart out of court, and then I will answer you touching all things that you wish to enquire." On the king asking what enemies he could mean: "Anger," said he, "and Lust; and let their places be taken by two better assessors, Discretion and Justice." This appeal being favourably received, he proceeds to relate the course of events which had led him to become a

Christian. When he finished, the king was so inflamed with anger as to be moved to commit his body to the flames. But fearing to incense the friends of one who had been so high in station, he suppressed his wrath, and, telling him that he owed his life to the peaceful counsellors whom he had promised to call into court, dismissed the once high officer from his presence.

To complete the worldly prosperity of this king one thing was wanting, for which he had long pined in vain. He was childless, and had no heir to the throne. At last, to his delight, a son is born, whom he names Joasaph, and the nation is bidden to rejoice and offer sacrifices at the event. When the soothsayers are met together to forecast his destiny, they vie with one another in presaging riches and power. But one astrologer, wiser than all the rest, foretold, like another Micaiah, that the infant prince should indeed attain to great honour, but not in his earthly father's kingdom. He would embrace the faith of Christ, and in His kingdom would he be great. Such a foreboding was gall and wormwood to Abenner. In the hope of falsifying the prediction, he had a splendid palace raised in a secluded city of his dominions. There he had the child kept, with the strictest injunctions to his attendants that nothing should meet his eyes, as he grew up, likely in the remotest degree to suggest the truths of the religion he abhorred. The royal pages were to be all young and beautiful. If one fell ill, he was to be removed immediately, and another, in all the bloom of health, substituted in his place. Every sight of sickness, or

decrepitude, or old age, was to be most carefully kept away from the prince's gaze. But as time went on, and Josaphat was becoming learned in all the wisdom of the Æthiopians and Persians, the feeling of seclusion began to grow upon his mind. Calling to him the most favoured and trusted of his attendants, he urged him to make known for what cause he was kept so confined. The man, conscious of the penetrating intellect of his young master, and fearing to offend the heir-apparent, made known to him the whole history. The prince said no more for the moment, but when the king next visited him, as he often did, he besought him to let him have freedom to go abroad. This request gave the king great uneasiness, but he could not refuse it; only redoubling his precautions against the occurrence of anything that might divert his son's thoughts to serious concerns. One day, however, as the prince and his suite were out hunting, he unexpectedly came upon two miserable objects, whose presence had not been observed. One was a blind man, the other maimed. Full of sorrowful concern and curiosity, Joasaph enquired into the causes of their sad state. The like befell not long afterwards, when an infirm old man came under his notice. And when he learnt that old age and disease were common to the human race, and that he too must expect, unless his days were cut short, to become a decrepit old man, he was filled with gloom, and longed for some one to throw light on these dark problems.[1]

[1] For the striking resemblance between this and what is related in the Life of Buddha, see the Appendix.

Now it happened that in the solitudes of Senaar was a monk named Barlaam. There was revealed to him in a dream the state of mind in which the young prince was, and he was commissioned to repair to him. Accordingly, laying aside his monk's dress and assuming the garb of a merchant, he "went on board ship[1] and came to the kingdom of the Indians." There, watching his opportunity, he accosted the same attendant in whom the prince had before confided, and professed to have a precious stone of exceeding value—the "pearl of great price" of the merchant in the parable—which he would give to the prince if allowed to come into his presence. After some parley he was admitted and joyfully received by Joasaph, who divined the errand on which he was come. The monk, to confirm him in this mood, related the following parable:—There was once a great and renowned king, who, when riding abroad in his golden chariot, attended by a gorgeous retinue, came upon two men in squalid attire. Their wan faces and emaciated frames attracted his attention. When he learnt that it was in the austerities of a life devoted to God that they had become thus wasted away, he leapt down from his chariot, and flinging himself on the ground at their feet, did obeisance to them and then saluted them most lovingly. The proud courtiers, offended at the sight of the royal diadem thus trailing in the dust, as they regarded it,

[1] This, it will be noticed, does not accord with the suggestion made above, that Senaar might be the country still so called; if at least, this "kingdom of the Indians" is to be sought in the interior of Africa.

but not daring to let their murmurs be openly heard by the king, applied to his brother and urged him to expostulate with their sovereign. The king's brother did so, and the king answered him; but what the meaning of that answer was could not be understood. But when evening was come the meaning of the answer seemed to be made but too plain. It was the custom of that country, when any man was sentenced to death, for a messenger to be sent to blow a certain trumpet before his door, thence called the trumpet of death. When the fatal sound was heard, the inmates knew what was meant, and the victim hastened to make his last preparation. On this night, therefore, the king sent a messenger to blow the trumpet before the door of his brother. He, pale and terrified, thought that his hour was come, and at early morn hastened, with wife and children clad in mourning, to sue for mercy at the hands of the king. The king set him free from his alarm, and read for him the meaning of this riddle. If he, foolish suppliant, thus dreaded the messenger of an earthly king, one but little higher in rank and honour than himself, how could he blame his brother for attending with awful reverence to any message that came to him from the King of Kings, even though brought by envoys in such humble guise as those at whom he had taken offence?

Such was the parable by which Barlaam encouraged and rewarded the condescension of the young prince towards himself. The conversation of the two, and the systematic instruction given by Barlaam, are then related,—it must be admitted, at almost interminable

length; though the introduction of apologues every now and then may have made it almost as interesting to readers of a bygone generation as "Pilgrim's Progress" has been since. In brief, Joasaph is baptized and led to regard the monastic life as the highest of all patterns. Barlaam, when his task is done, returns to his distant hermitage, and Joasaph is left to face the king's anger as best he may. The secret cannot be long kept from him, and his rage and fury know no bounds. But by the counsel of his chief minister Araches he resorts to stratagem. He raises the hue and cry far and wide in pursuit of the monk who has caused the mischief, and in due time gives out that the chase has been successful. Nachor, the astrologer, is to be disguised so as to resemble the missing Barlaam; a solemn assembly is to be proclaimed; there the advocates of the old religion shall dispute with the supposed Christian monk; and when the latter gradually succumbs, as it is arranged that he shall, the prince will feel that his new teacher is unable to give a good reason for the faith that is in him. The plot is an artful one, but is baffled by the penetration of Joasaph. He discerns at the outset who it is that stands before him under the semblance of Barlaam. Turning to the assumed monk, he thus addresses him: "Barlaam, thou hast not forgotten in what splendour and luxury thou didst find me. Believing thy words, I renounced all my prospects of worldly glory, and braved the anger of my father, to worship an invisible king, and earn the recompence that He has promised. Now thou art on thy trial. It thou dost make good the truth of what I learnt

from thee, and withstand the gainsayers, then shalt thou have yet greater honour as a herald of the truth, and I will continue in thy doctrine, and worship Christ to my latest breath. But if thou failest, I will avenge my confusion on thee, and with mine own hands will tear out thy heart and thy false tongue, and give them for the dogs to feast upon."

Such an exordium was not very reassuring, and we cannot wonder that the courage of Nachor failed him. So, as it was part of the arrangement that he should begin by assailing idolatry, and as the words of Joasaph gave him no inducement to alter his theme, he made a vigorous apology for Christianity all through, exposing the vanities alike of Egyptian and Hellenic superstition. So unexpected a termination of the debate mightily incensed the king; and Nachor only saved his life by being allowed to remain with the prince that night, who made a proselyte of him and sent him away by stealth to join the Christian anchorites.

It would be tedious to relate in detail all the other devices adopted, and the trials of his faith which Joasaph withstood. Beautiful maidens were sent to wait upon him; and one of these tried him sorely by professing herself ready to become a Christian, and asking whether, on his own principles, such a prize as that would not make him willing to yield to her solicitations. This was the stratagem of Theudas the magician, and it was a hard one to overcome. Yet the constancy of Joasaph prevailed even over this. One final effort was now made. Calling together his council, and asking their advice in the

emergency, he was recommended by Araches to share his kingdom with his son. If the cares of state should withdraw the prince's thoughts from religion, their end would be gained. If not, it would be a final token that Christianity was from God, and that they must not fight against it. The counsel was followed, and the kingdom shared with Joasaph. A separate capital was assigned him, and a full share of royal magnificence. But this last temptation was foiled. The young sovereign acted like a second Josiah. He cleared his city from its idolatries; he protected and encouraged the Christians within his realm; and by his justice and clemency made settlers from all parts to flock to his jurisdiction, so that his government prospered beyond example. Yielding at last to this overwhelming evidence, the old king Abenner comes as a humble disciple to his son; is by him instructed in the faith, and dies a Christian. Then Joasaph, resigning the sovereignty to Barachias, a Christian also, lays aside for ever his royal robes; and starts on foot, a humble pilgrim, to seek his beloved instructor, Barlaam. After a weary search of two years, he finds him in a desert cave, and there abides with him till his death, which the Golden Legend places about the year 380. The bodies of the two are afterwards found reposing side by side, and conveyed by Barachias with all honour to the capital.

Such, in a very meagre and curtailed outline, is the once famous story of "Barlaam and Joasaph." Whether it be judged to be from the pen of Damascenus or not—and there is much in the Greek that

has an alien look about it[1]—the reader may not grudge the space devoted to what must have been read with eager interest (and, we need not scruple to say, with profit) by many a lonely recluse.

(2.)—If in the foregoing "profitable history" there was matter for doubt as to the authorship, or the actual occurrence of the events related, there was yet nothing which absolutely exceeded the bounds of probability. The second piece which I have chosen as a specimen of the writings whose genuineness is doubtful—the "Panegyric on St. Barbara"—is of a very different description. The *enormes fabulæ* that it contains would tax a credulity the most unbounded. At the same time, though I should be glad to believe that John of Damascus had no hand in it, and though it may read in some respects like a distorted imitation of "Barlaam and Joasaph," it did not seem right to leave it out of sight. Lequien had so little doubt of its being a genuine work of our author's, that in the short preface with which he introduces it, he says that "absolutely nothing can be discovered in the treatise, at variance with the diction, style, and manner" of John of Damascus. And a later writer,[2] not likely to be uncritical, is disposed to admit that the panegyric was really delivered by him. The preliminary section is cer-

[1] Such expressions as ἦν γιγνώσκων for ἐγίγνωσκε, ὄίδωκε for ἔδωκε, and the like, strike one as unfamiliar. On the other hand some passages, such as the prayer of Joasaph, for example, (p. 1141), are not unworthy of the John surnamed Chrysorroas.

[2] Langen: "Johannes von Damaskus," p. 238.

tainly in a style not unworthy of Damascenus; and when the narrative of the saint's life begins, it is introduced with a "'tis said," which might be construed as exempting the preacher from being held responsible for the historical truth of the events he goes on to relate. The question whether this is so or not, would open up a discussion of some interest, were this the proper place for it, on a certain habit of mind, by no means unknown even at the present day. I mean that of those who are conscious of no scruple, no shock to their sense of historical accuracy, in reading, let us suppose, some of the lives of the saints in the "Legenda aurea." While a scholar and theologian like Vives, the tutor to our Princess Mary Tudor, could declare that such a collection deserved rather to be called "Legenda plumbea" than "aurea" —a Leaden, rather than a Golden, Legend—there are many who read and repeat and draw inferences from the prodigious stories there met with, till it becomes difficult to ascertain whether they ever think of the literal occurrence or non-occurrence of what they appear to accept as facts. In the minds of some such persons it would seem as if the moral truth, the spiritual reality conveyed, had entirely obliterated, or made, at any rate, to vanish into very dim outline, the distinction between what *was* and what was not. And thus it is quite possible that what is here recorded of St. Barbara may to some minds present no difficulty at all; and that, not because they either consciously accept, or consciously deny, the literal truth of the occurrences related, but because the question of it does not occur to them at all, and

would be thought irrelevant if it did. If it should be judged, on maturely considering the evidence, that John of Damascus really delivered the encomium now under review, and composed the introduction to it, we might perhaps avoid the necessity of taxing him with undue credulity, if we classed him, in this respect at least, with those whose habit of mind has been described.

Of the life of St. Barbara very little has been preserved to us.[1] Her commemoration day in the Latin Church is December 4th. In mediæval times she was regarded as the protectress of captives.[2] According to the account embodied in this panegyric, she was the only daughter of a provincial governor, named Dioscorus, in the reign of Maximianus II. (A.D. 305–311). That emperor was noted for his fierce persecution of the Christians, and Dioscorus seems to have copied his example. To guard the ripening charms of his daughter, he immured her in a lofty tower. Whether she was a convert to the true faith already, or by some means was made acquainted with it in her seclusion, we are not clearly informed. At any rate, she only became more confirmed in it during her solitude. So far there is a resemblance between her story and that of Joasaph. Presently her father pays her a visit, and desires her to choose one of the various suitors eagerly ambitious of her hand. She rejects all their

[1] In the "Dictionary of Christian Biography" her name does not occur.

[2] See "Brand's Popular Antiquities" (ed. by Sir Henry Ellis), 1841, vol. i., p. 197.

advances with scorn. Thus baffled, Dioscorus departs, after leaving orders for a chamber to be constructed for her, having two windows. She directs the workmen to make three in it, with a religious symbolism that can easily be divined. Her father, on his return, at once observes the change, and demands the reason of it. She openly avows her motive, and seeks to convince him of the truth of the Christian faith. Then, transported with fury, he rushes upon her with drawn sword to slay her. But lo! a neighbouring rock, less stony-hearted than this unnatural sire, opens its bosom to receive her. She passes out, through the way thus provided, to the other side of the mountain. But even here her relentless father pursues her, unmoved by the miracle displayed. Having secured his victim, he has her imprisoned yet more strictly than before, and applies to Marcianus, the presiding governor of his province, to use torture, or any means he thinks fit, to quell the spirit of the Christian maiden. The reader of martyrologies can now anticipate the course of the story. At first Marcianus, struck by her beauty, tries to ingratiate himself with her. When his advances are rejected with contempt, his admiration turns to hate, and he tries threats and then tortures. She is scourged, and her lacerated flesh rubbed with horse-hair cloth, till she is one mass of blood. But when brought again before his tribunal, on the following day, her wounds have been healed, and not a scar is to be seen! The governor only hardens his heart at the sight, and still more dreadful tortures follow. The recital of them all, and of her

miraculous preservation through them, is not necessary. Suffice it to say that, at last, when her constancy had been fully proved, and the time of her deliverance was come, her father's sword was permitted to drink her life-blood, and she fell upon the mountains in the same spot as St. Juliana. Dioscorus, as he descended, was struck by lightning, and consumed so utterly by the fire of divine vengeance, that not so much as a trace of his ashes was to be found. One account adds that the scene of the martyrdom was Euchaitæ, in Paphlagonia. According to the Latin version found in some editions of the "Golden Legend," it was Nicomedia.[1]

As the object in setting before the reader an epitome of the two stories of "Barlaam and Joasaph" and "St. Barbara," has chiefly been, that no material portion of the writings ascribed to John of Damascus might be left unnoticed, it is not requisite to add much more in the way of comments upon them. However gratified some might be to find convincing evidence that a narrative so portentous, in certain respects, as the latter of the two, was not justly assigned to Damascenus, such a desire must not be allowed to warp the judgment. The style is not unlike that of some of the homilies ad-

1 "Legenda Aurea" (ed. Dr. Th. Graesse), 1846, p. 898. Later additions are there subjoined, illustrating the office of St. Barbara as a deliverer of captives. As Bithynia (in which province Nicomedia was situated), and Paphlagonia were adjacent countries, there is no material discrepancy in the localities assigned.

mitted to be his[1]; and, as has been remarked, his frequent insertion of "'tis said," or "so runs the story," while it does not relieve him from the responsibility of adopting the account given, frees him, at any rate, from the charge of originating it. And to one living, as he did, in an age of desolating wars, when the sword of Mahomet's successors seemed to promise the extirpation of Christianity from the earth, the mind of a monk at St. Saba's convent must have been ready to receive such stories of constancy under persecution, and less critical than we can now afford to be in discriminating the true from the false.

[1] The fondness, before noticed, for Homeric or poetical forms is equally marked. Some of the terms used are striking and effective in their metaphorical application. Such are γεωργεῖν for "cultivating" thoughts, ζωγραφεῖν for "depicting" to the imagination, and the like.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

In endeavouring to form a just estimate of the place to be assigned to St. John of Damascus, as a writer and an actor in the history of the Church, our chief difficulty lies in the confused nature of the evidence before us. The vague and uncritical, not to say legendary character of the only professed biography we have of him, has already been noticed. But, what is of more importance than this, the works attributed to him need to be thoroughly examined and sifted. Many pieces bearing his name still remain in manuscript. The Imperial Library at Vienna is said to be especially rich in this department. Before it is possible to arrive at a true decision upon the merits of the author, these should be examined, and compared with the works already in print. In case of the latter also, much remains still to be done. The edition of Lequien was an immense improvement upon all previous ones. He probably realised all that had been expected from Aubert in 1636. But even he includes many treatises admitted by himself to be doubtful, and some that he considers manifestly spurious; while on the other hand he leaves out several, the *Barlaam and Joasaph* included, which have since been printed by the Abbé Migne. Hence

it is plain that, until some scholar has arisen, with the ability and patience to give the world a critical and exhaustive edition of the works of this Father, any estimate of his position must be to some degree tentative. If this allowance be made, one or two reflections seem to suggest themselves as just and natural.

The one which may first occur to the reader, if he has followed the review of the writings of Damascenus given above, is that likely to arise from the latest impression on his mind—the impression produced by what have been called the doubtful writings. If disposed to agree with those critics who think the "Panegyric on St. Barbara," for example, to be genuine, he can hardly help regarding him, with Voss,[1] as "in plerisque credulus." And this charge of credulity will, I fear, under any circumstances, have to be admitted. The degree of it will of course vary considerably, according to the verdict finally pronounced upon this or that particular treatise in respect of genuineness. One such treatise, for example (I mean that *Concerning those who have died in the faith*,[2]) is rejected by writers like Suarez, Bellarmine, and Lequien himself, not only from its want of accordance in doctrine with admitted works of Damascenus, but from the monstrous fables it contains. The general subject of it is the benefit which the departed may receive from the prayers of the living. And, as

[1] "De Hist. Græc." ii., c. 24.

[2] "De his qui in fide dormierunt," Migne's ed., vol. ii., pp. 248–277.

instances, we read in it of the deliverance from Hades of Falconilla by the prayers of Thecla, of the like deliverance of the Emperor Trajan by the intercession of Pope Gregory, and of the oracular skull which Macarius used to consult. Now, if even theologians who accept the doctrine of purgatory, object to such a treatise as this on account of its "enormes fabulæ," and on that ground, at least in part, would refuse its claim to be genuine, it must obviously make a great difference in our opinion of Damascenus, whether we accept works like this as his real production, or not. But when every abatement is made that can fairly be made on this score, I think enough still remains to bear out the charge of over-credulity, which is one of the first and most obvious faults to be found with him. Admitting this, some considerations arise which may help in a certain degree to modify our judgment. If we believe that miraculous powers did once exist in the Church of Christ, and were gradually withdrawn as the need of them grew less, it will always be a question requiring great caution in the answer, at what period this withdrawal became final. Unless we are prepared to cut the knot summarily by discarding all historical evidence which it does not suit our inclination to receive, we must admit that when Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, and many more, distinctly assert the fact of such supernatural power, and point to its effects in healing the sick, and the like, as an evidence patent to all—they were affirming what came legitimately within their own province to decide upon, and knew what their state-

ments meant.[1] If then we at the present time think that we see reasons for limiting the continuance of such phenomena to the middle of the third century, or to any given period still later, it will be the result of a preponderance of evidence, or of our own conceptions of the likely and probable. Whatever liberty we thus claim, we must be prepared to extend to others; and hence we need not judge too severely a monk of Palestine in the seventh or eighth century, if he should seem to have no doubts or misgivings about the existence of miraculous powers in the Church in his own day. Moreover, it is in seasons of great and exciting changes that we find the exercise of such powers chiefly recorded. The miracles of the Old Testament, as all are aware, cluster round the epochs of change and convulsion in Israel's history. So it was with the second Exodus and with the greater Joshua. And the days in which the lot of John of Damascus was cast were undoubtedly days of convulsion, of a moral upheaving such as the world had not seen since the foundation of Christianity. Before the advancing surge of Mahometanism, what ancient fabric could remain and not be overthrown? Hence a need of sudden and visible interposition would be felt, which we in peaceful times cannot realise. Hence the minds of men would be predisposed to believe it; and

[1] See the remarks in Neander, a writer not inclined to the side of superstition:—"History of the Christian Church" (Bohn's ed.), vol. i., pp. 100–104.

this disposition would tend to make possible the very results at which we marvel.[1]

Akin to the credulity which, after all allowance is made, we can hardly avoid imputing to John of Damascus, is a tendency to superstition, or what some will call by that name. In the effort to give an impartial summary of his merits, one in which his defects are noted as well as his excellencies, it would be plainly unfair to omit all allusion to this side of his character, for the simple reason that it was as a champion of image-worship that much of his reputation was won. In this, as in the previous instance, it is not without taking some trouble to enter into the real circumstances of the case, that we can possibly arrive at a just conclusion. The popular expression, "image-worship," involves two equivocal terms. The great difference of meaning with which the word "worship" may be used, is familiar to all, and has already been remarked upon in the chapter on the iconoclastic controversy. And by the term "images," in like manner, we are not to understand what the word would commonly suggest to the mind at the present time, but the *icons*, or sacred pictures of the Eastern Church. Nor is this a mere distinction without a difference. The use of the one was allowed

[1] This frame of mind was found equally among the followers of Islam. Though Mahomet himself generally evaded the appeal to miraculous powers, professing that the Koran was itself a standing miracle, yet his adherents were not so scrupulous. According to Ockley, one Arabic writer states that "the miracles recorded of Mohammed almost exceed enumeration." "Hist. of the Saracens," 1847, p. 66. n.

when that of the other was still condemned. "The ancients," says a writer quoted by Bingham,[1] "did not approve of massy images, or statues of wood, or metal, or stone, but only pictures or paintings, to be used in churches." "And this shews," adds Bingham, "that massy images or statues were thought to look too much like idols," even so late as the second Council of Nicæa, in 787, which reversed the decrees of the iconoclastic emperors. But when we have thus defined our terms, and so reduced the danger of importing modern ideas and prejudices into ancient controversies, the question still remains whether Damascenus, by throwing the weight of his eloquence and energetic pleading into the scale against the imperial cause, did more good or harm to the Christian faith. There are those, as we know, even in our own branch of the Church, who are deeply and honestly grateful to him, and to others who fought on the same side, for preserving, as they think, truths in imminent danger of being let go. To them it seems that John of Damascus and his party, even if they did not see clearly the ultimate issues of the fight, had yet a consciousness that in struggling against the abolition of pictures of Christ and his saints in their churches, they were contending for the truth of His incarnation, and for the whole mystery of the Godhead manifest in the flesh. To give up these "laymen's books," these pictured illustrations of Biblical and Christian history, by which the walls of the Church became so many stone pages, preaching sermons to the simple

[1] "Antiquities," bk. viii., c. viii., § 11.

and illiterate, would have been to abandon a precious means of fostering devotion and instructing the ignorant. More than that, it would have helped to forward the spread of a bare theism in Christendom, to deaden the belief in a Saviour who took our likeness upon Him and so glorified human nature. It may be so. But, having regard to the undoubted repudiation of everything approaching image-worship (even in the most qualified sense of "worship") in the early Church, and bearing in mind also the development of the practice in later times, and the abuses that have flowed from it, I for one cannot but regret that the eloquence and enthusiasm of Damascenus were enlisted in this cause. No doubt there was much to provoke such a course of action, and to make it natural and intelligible to us, in the high-handed and arbitrary conduct of Leo the Isaurian. If Leo thought it well to let it be known to the world that what most offended Mahometans in Christianity was not of the essence of that religion, but only a false growth that had become attached to it, his opponents may have been equally sincere in believing that the prophet's followers were not to be won over by such means. We may see these two lines of conduct actively followed in our own day. Some would conciliate opponents, or remove the causes of their opposition, by keeping in the background what most offends them in their own principles. Others think that the truest wisdom is to hold fast what they believe to be true, and let the contrast strike as sharply as possible on the minds of their antagonists, with such results as Providence shall determine. It is not

meant here to repeat the arguments that were brought forward in the chapter specially devoted to this subject. The reader will form his own judgment of the character of Damascenus by help of the materials before him. I am not aware of any more serious charge that can be brought against him than what has been adverted to—a tendency to over-credulity and superstition; and having given its full prominence to these traits in his character, it is a more pleasing task to recapitulate briefly the services he has rendered to religion and learning.

As a preserver of ancient learning, in an age and country when all the monuments of it seemed in peril of destruction before the advancing host of Islam, the world will ever be indebted to him. As has been seen, it is not certain what amount of Aristotle he was acquainted with.[1] But he has left one treatise distinctly based on the "Categories;" and the title of another, "De Virtute et Vitio," as well as the general nature of it,[2] seem to point to the "De Virtutibus et Vitiis," formerly ascribed to the same author. In what he has left on the subject of natural science, if we may dignify it by this now ambitious title, he may possibly have derived his knowledge from the "De cælo," or the "Almagest"

[1] See on this subject the essay of M. Renoux: "De dialectica Santi Joannis Damasceni," 1863, p. 30, and the references there given.

[2] This, and the companion piece, "De octo Spiritibus nequitiæ," appear to be only fragments of a connected treatise. In their present form they possess no great merit. See Perrier's essay: "Jean Damascène, sa vie et ses écrits," 1862, p. 14.

of Ptolemy. In any case, poor, even childishly poor, as his acquaintance with many branches of human learning must now be thought, if compared with modern standards, he yet has left us, such as it is, something approaching a system of logic, of ethics, and of natural philosophy.

What he has done but feebly and imperfectly in the department of secular knowledge, he has done far more fully and completely in that of theology. Here, too, it is chiefly as a framer of systems that we are indebted to him: his work is of the nature of an encyclopædia. Making theology a part of philosophy, as Aristotle had done before him, he applied to it a philosophic method. Taking for his basis the existence of God, as demonstrable by reason, he organizes step by step the whole body of religious and Christian truth.[1] He is thus the progenitor of scholasticism. Though this proposition has been disputed, as an exercise for academic skill,[2] it is still the all but unanimous verdict, that the great treatise on the "Orthodox Faith" was "the starting-point of the scholastic system" that afterwards grew to such proportions in the West. There will, no doubt, be very different opinions on the value of the service

[1] See De Gérando: "Histoire comparée," 1823, t. iv., p. 159, quoted by Nève in the article in "La Belgique" before referred to.

[2] As by F. H. J. Grundlehner, in his "Johannes Damascenus: Academisch Proefschrift," Utrecht, 1876, p. 257. I regret that I did not meet with this work till my own was all but completed. The author gives a translation in Dutch verse of some of the hymns of Damascenus.

thus rendered. Those to whom systematic theology, as such, is distasteful, and who object to doctrines becoming, in their phrase, "crystallised into dogmas," will be little disposed to thank Damascenus for what he has done. But even they will hardly dispute the reality of the service performed by one who, when Caliphs were striving to impose the Arabic tongue on Syria and other Asiatic conquests, helped so materially to keep the lamp of Greek learning from extinction. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote Greek with considerable purity. His iambics are often of an almost classic elegance. And he was the great master of John Damascene. The numerous quotations, not only from him but from a multitude of Greek authors besides, found both in the "Fons Scientiæ" and the "Sacra Parallela," would provide a field of Hellenic literature, sufficient for the wants of that generation. In having so provided it, and having thus become the initiator of a warlike but ill-taught race into the mysteries of an earlier civilisation, Damascenus is entitled to the praise that the elder Lenormant awarded him, of being in the front rank of the master spirits from whom the genius of the Arabs drew its inspiration.

What bearing the doctrinal writings of John of Damascus have on modern controversies, especially that with the Church of Rome, has been partially discussed in an earlier chapter, and it would be beside our purpose to enter upon it at any length here. A minister of a Scottish Presbyterian Church in Holland, in the reign of Charles II., would not be likely to read with too favourable eyes the works of a

Greek Father of the eighth century. But one such[1] has recorded that, setting aside his maintenance of images, he was "in many other things an adversary to the present doctrine of Rome." As evidence, he cites such passages as the following against the authority of tradition:—"All that is given unto us by the Law and Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists, we embrace, acknowledge, and reverence, seeking no further" ("De Fide Orthodoxa," i, c. 1). Or again, as against the admission of the apocryphal books:—"After he hath at length recommended the reading of the Scriptures, he reckoneth the books of the Old Testament according to the Hebrew; and then he saith, 'The Wisdom of Solomon, and of Jesus the Son of Sirach, are pleasant and good; but are not numbered among the prophetical books, nor were put into the ark'" (*Ib.*, iv., c. 17). Or once more: "In cap. 25 he commendeth virginity, and then he addeth, 'This we say, not derogating from marriage, God forbid! for we know that God blessed marriage by his presence; and it is said, *marriage is honourable amongst all men.*'" It will be remembered how plain and outspoken were his words on the culpable neglect of those—even soldiers and husbandmen—who did not read the Scriptures, and, for lack of the sound knowledge they would thus have gained, fell into such foolish superstitions as those he censures about dragons and evil fairies.

[1] Alexander Petrie: "A compendious History of the Catholick Church," fol. 1662, part i., p. 88. The passage relating to transubstantiation has been quoted before, p. 128.

One more topic remains to be noticed, and on this we may speak with perhaps the least reservation or qualification of all. That is, the merit of John of Damascus as the author of hymns still used in the services of the Church. It is one testimony to his greatness in this respect, that many hymns are attributed to him, which in all probability were not his, and that the whole system of modern church music is sometimes referred to him as well. A sort of haze surrounds him, from this point of view, which it is not easy to penetrate. Gerbert, in his "History of Sacred Music,"[1] makes him perform the same service for the Eastern Church that Gregory the Great had done for the Western; that is, as far as I understand it, employ what we call notes, instead of letters of the alphabet, to indicate musical sounds, and certain marks or characters to betoken the intervals of the ascending or descending scale. While in Latin service books, adds this authority, musical notes are not found before the

[1] "De Cantu et Musica sacra," auctore Martino Gerberto, 1774, vol. ii., p. 1. He describes the invention as "novum facilioremque cantandi modum per notas musicas, loco Græcorum characterum onum [*sic*, lege *tonum*] seu chordam indicantium." The invention of marks to denote intervals (the scale?) Gerbert assigns to Damascene on the authority of Zarlino. But the merit of this invention is denied him by Fétis, "Biographie universelle des Musiciens," 1862, t. iii., p. 433, although he admits that Damascene "doit être considéré comme le reformateur du chant de l'Église grecque, c'est à dire, comme ayant attaché son nom à l'un des faits les plus importants de l'histoire de l'art." The second volume of Mr. Chappell's "History of Music," which would cover this period, has not yet, I believe, been published.

ninth century, in the Greek they are found a century earlier; that is, in the age of John of Damascus. But, whatever be the exact nature of the improvements he introduced into Church music, it is evident that, like the Emperor Julian before him,[1] he saw the value of choral music as a help to divine worship, and brought to bear on it the same genius for method and system that he had applied to doctrinal theology. The high-flown epithets attached to his name in the service-books of the Greek Church, "sweet-breathing organ of spiritual songs," "heavenly lute of charming sound," and the like, testify at least to the grateful appreciation of his merits shown by the members of his own communion. As a hymn-writer, there can be no question of the high place to be assigned to John Damascene. Whatever difficulty there may be in drawing the line between compositions certainly his, and others bearing the name of "John the Monk," or "John Arclas," enough remains of undisputed authorship to justify the title given him of "chief of the Greek hymnodists." And this may, perhaps, in the end give him the truest claim on the admiration of posterity. His services will not be forgotten, as the preserver of ancient learning, as the gatherer of Christian doctrines into a system, as the opponent alike of imperialism and Mahometanism, as the

[1] "He gave orders at Alexandria for the education of talented boys for the public performance of temple-singing. To good singers he opened the best prospects." Ullmann's "Gregory of Nazianzum" (tr. by Cox), p. 86 n. Ullmann adds: "Would that the efforts thus made by Julian for *his* faith might find more imitators among Christians!"

Doctor of Christian art. But while some may be found to doubt the beneficial nature of his work in one or more of these departments, though none would dispute his distinction in them, in one conclusion all must agree. There can be no greater glory to a Christian poet than to have furnished the words in which the devotion of a Church finds utterance. That in his strains, more than in any other, the triumphant joy of Easter, and the solemn farewells of the graveside, should alike find expression, is surely one of the highest tributes that can be paid him. And this tribute, this high prerogative, has been for ages awarded to John of Damascus by the Eastern Church.

APPENDIX.

P. 191.—The stories of Josaphat and Buddha.

The points of resemblance between the *Barlaam and Josaphat* and the *Lalita Vistara*, or legendary Life of Buddha, are so interesting as to deserve more than a passing allusion in a note. Attention was called to the subject by Professor Max Müller, in a Lecture on the "Migration of Fables" delivered at the Royal Institution, June 3rd, 1870, and afterwards published in the *Contemporary Review* for the following July. It had been before remarked upon, as Max Müller observes, by M. Laboolaye (in the *Débats*, 1859), by Dr. F. Liebrecht (in the *Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur*, Berlin, 1860), and by Mr. Beal (in his translation of the *Travels of Fa Hian*, 1869). It is also discussed by Dr. Langen, in his *Johannes von Damaskus*, 1879, p. 251.

The similarity of the stories is especially seen in the accounts of the bringing up of the young princes, and, above all, in what befel each of them during his excursions from the palace where he had been confined. After reading what has been stated above (p. 191), in the abstract given from John of Damascus, let any one turn to the companion picture, and he will see what a resemblance there is between them. "In the *Lalita Vistara*," says Professor Max Müller, —"the Life, though no doubt the legendary Life, of Buddha,—the father of Buddha is a king. When his son is born, the Brahman Asita predicts that he will rise to great glory, and become either a powerful

king, or, renouncing the throne and embracing the life of a hermit, become a Buddha. The great object of his father is to prevent this. He therefore keeps the young prince, when he grows up, in his garden and palaces, surrounded by all pleasures which might turn his mind from contemplation to enjoyment. More especially, he is to know nothing of illness, old age, and death, which might open his eyes to the misery and unreality of life. After a time, however, the prince receives permission to drive out; and then follow the three drives so famous in Buddhist history."—Without following out the parallel in all its details, it may be added, in brief, that on his first drive, through the Eastern gate, the youthful Buddha is met by a decrepit old man, and turns back. On his second drive, through the Southern gate, he is met by a sick man; on his third through the Western, by a corpse; and on his fourth, through the Northern gate, by a religious mendicant, or devotee, whose example he resolves to follow. The towers commemorating these drives are said to have been standing as late as the seventh century.

No doubt there are minor discrepancies. Josaphat is described as meeting two men on his first excursion, one blind, the other maimed (or, as it is in the Latin version, a leper); and as not making any third journey. The monk Barlaam is sent, instead, to visit him. Still, the general similarity remains. Each ends by converting his royal father, and each dies a saint. And, if it should come to be regarded as certain, that in this "Profitable History, brought from the interior region of the Ethiopians, called India," we have indeed only another version of the Life of Buddha, it will furnish matter (as Max Müller points out) for very instructive reflection, that Barlaam and Josaphat should have been canonized both in the Eastern and Western Church.

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